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JAMES GILMOUR, M.A.

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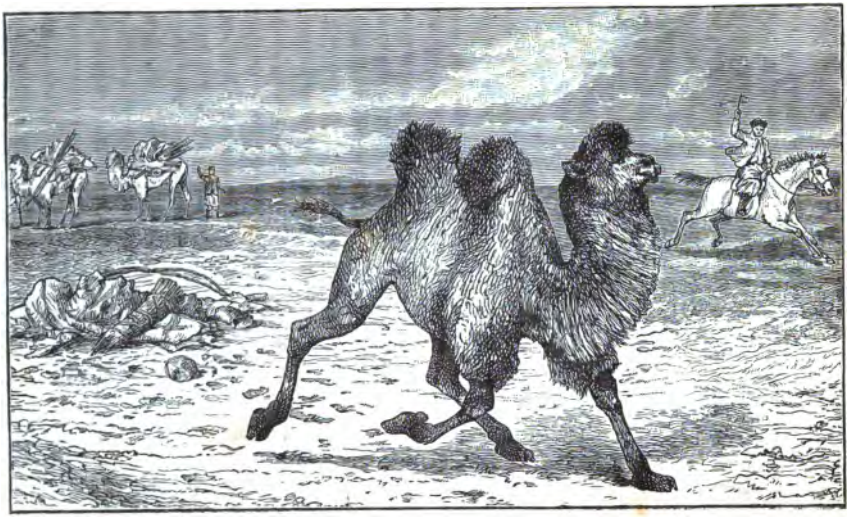
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ADVENTURES IN MONGOLIA

BY THE

REV. JAMES GILMOUR, M.A.

LONDON MISSION, PEKING

WITH FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS book consists of chapters from Mr. Gilmour's larger work, entitled 'Among the Mongols.' The aim has been to select such portions as may help to further the causes which led Mr. Gilmour to write the book originally. He is earnestly desirous that his fellow countrymen may get clear and accurate ideas about the Mongols, their habits, way of life, and modes of thought, and thus be able to take a more intelligent and more personal interest in the great work of winning them for Christ.

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ADVENTURES IN MONGOLIA.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH MONGOLIA.

Landed on the plain in the dark—Morning on the plain—Boiling tea—Russian soldier's adventure with dogs—Fellow-travellers arrive in the night—Start in the morning—Midday halt—Parting feast—Russian manner of adieu—Fairly away into the desert—Members of the caravan—Order of march—Difficulty of intercourse—Pocket-dictionary—Shooting ducks and geese—Commissariat department—Fresh camels—Urga—North of Urga mountainous and wooded—Cross mountain range—Accident—Kiachta in sight—Devotions in Russian church—Mongol lama's present.

IT had been dark some hours, and though late we were still travelling on, when suddenly a great outcry of several voices was heard on our right, then the cart could be felt diverging from the road on to the grass, and a few minutes later we came to a standstill. Crawling to the mouth of the cart and drawing back the curtain, there could be seen dimly in the darkness a Russian soldier on his knees blowing at a smoky fire, which now and then emitted a feeble flicker of flame, just enough to reveal for a moment

the face of the soldier and a gleam of the white inside of the half-erected tent behind him. A number of people speaking Mongolian in a loud voice gathered round the cart; and as the eye became more accustomed to the surroundings it was possible to discern the dark outline of camels and baggage lying around in confusion. My Chinese carter, in place of taking me to a Chinese inn, as had been arranged, had taken me out on to the open plain, and unhitching his two mules, went off and left me in the encampment of the caravan of Mongols who were to take me across the desert.

We had left Kalgan shortly after noon, and travelled without stopping for refreshment. Part of our road had been over a lofty mountain pass, where the keen air gave edge to a keen appetite; and after it was too dark to read, the imagination had conjured up a very charming picture of the array of dishes with which it would be proper to celebrate the hospitality of the last inn I could hope to see for a month. It was a surprise to look out and see, not the courtyard of an inn, but a caravan encamped on the open plain. The visionary feast vanished, I was to have no more to do with inns, I had already entered on the desert journey.

I had come fully equipped with provisions and cooking utensils, and though everything was among the baggage of the caravan it was not easy to find things in the darkness. In addition it was already very late, and the fire was slow to burn up. The rest of the caravan had not dined, so that rather than cause delay I declined the use of the fire which was offered me, and accepted the invitation to share in the common

meal. This settled, we gathered round the fire to watch the progress of the cooking. The large shallow iron pot that was produced was new, and the first process was to clean it; but this cleaning was performed in such an unsatisfactory way that I gave up the idea of sharing the food cooked in it, bethought myself of a cold chicken, with which a missionary lady, herself experienced in the exigencies of Mongolian travel, had kindly and thoughtfully provided me, ate part of it by the light of the fire, and leaving the Mongols and the Russian soldier filling their wooden cups from the pot which had just been lifted from the grate, retired to my cart for the night. The cart was long enough for a man to lie stretched out at full length, and the fatigues of the day and the strange surroundings of the place were soon forgotten in sleep.

Next morning, on putting my head out of my cart, I found that the sun was high in the heavens. The Mongols were sitting round the fire watching the same pot I had left them engaged with last night, this time filled not with rice, but with tea, the furious boiling of which they were moderating by dipping it up and pouring it back again from a height. The camels were dispersed at no great distance, grazing among the profusion of vegetation and flowers that covered the plain. A little way off were some Mongol tents; behind was the green range of hills over which we had come last night; before, the open plain over which we were to start to-morrow. It being the middle of August, the weather was at its best, and the plain in all its glory.

The day was Sunday, and as no one had anything

to do but wait for the arrival of the travellers who were to complete the number of our caravan, all spent a day of delicious repose. At one time the repose was suddenly broken by a stirring incident. A great cry made us look towards the Mongol tents, and there we saw our Russian soldier running full speed, pursued by the dogs of the place, which were rapidly gaining on him. For a moment the issue seemed doubtful, but the distance was not great, and he had time to dart in at the low door before the baffled brutes overtook him. He had sauntered carelessly towards the tents with no thought of danger, when the dogs, which had been a little way off on the plain, suddenly spied him and gave chase. But for the friendly warning of some one who had noticed them, they would have been upon him before he was aware. As soon as the pursued made good his escape, the feelings of spectators, natives, and the pursued himself found vent in laughter; but the adventure, though trivial in itself, was useful as teaching, in a very graphic manner, the care that a stranger must exercise in approaching Mongol habitations.

The evening came, but not our expected travellers, and it was not till some time during the night that their arrival broke the slumbers of our company.

The following day, after early breakfast, some friends, who had come to convoy the Russian family in whose company I was to cross the desert, went off for a forenoon's shooting, while the Mongols set seriously to work to arrange and load the camels for the first half-day's march. Soon after we had encamped for the midday halt, the sportsmen turned up, a feast

was prepared and discussed, the final adieus were said, the parting being made all the more impressive by the Russian men kissing each other, and, about an hour before sunset, the separation took place, our friends turning southwards towards China, we turning northwards towards Russia, and feeling much as if on board a ship starting on a voyage, when the pilot has just left taking letters with the last salutations to our friends.

We were now fairly started on the journey of a month, which was to take us from Kalgan, a town on the north frontier of China, to Kiachta, on the south frontier of Russia, a distance of about eight hundred and forty English miles.

The caravan consisted of the Russian postmaster, who had been stationed some years at Kalgan, and was now with his wife, four children, and a soldier—who spoke of his master as the 'Commandant,' returning to his native Siberia—myself, and four or five Mongols to manage the camels and camel-carts.

The postmaster had two camel-carts for the personal accommodation of himself and family, and several camels carrying his provisions and goods. I had a camel-cart and one loaded camel. The Russian soldier perched himself upon a camel load, and there were in addition a string of camels carrying grain, the private trading venture of the Mongols whose camels we hired.

The order of march was nearly as regular and monotonous as the features of the desert itself. At sunrise, all got up and cooked and ate breakfast. Then the march began and lasted usually till noon,

when, at some favourable camping place, a halt was called, the camels turned adrift to pasture, the main meal of the day cooked and eaten, and a fresh start made about an hour before sunset. This night march was the longest, continuing usually till after midnight, sometimes even till dawn of next day. The desert roads for the most part are not rough, and the motion of the cart did not often disturb our sleep; but it was remarked that we usually awoke when the cart came to a stand, just as passengers in a steamer at sea wake up when the screw stops.

As we travelled long stages, and were a good deal occupied during the halts,—the Russian father and mother with their children, I with my cookery, having no servant,—we had scant leisure to fraternise with each other. Even when we had time and opportunity, we could do little in the way of conversation. The Russian lady knew no language but her own; of Russian I knew nothing, so exchanges of courtesies between us had to be conducted in dumb show. Her husband, the 'Commandant,' knew some Chinese, of which I also knew a very little; and sometimes, when our Chinese failed, the soldier was called upon to make a vain attempt at communicating with me by means of Mongolian, of which I knew even less than of Chinese.

Almost the only time of day the postmaster and I had for attempts at conversation was between sunset and dark, when the children being quiet he and I would walk together in the cool alongside of the caravan, and hold what intercourse was possible. In desperate extremities he had one resource. Diving

into the depths of his trouser-pocket, he would produce from that receptacle a Russian-Chinese phrase-book, turn over the leaves, and point out to me the Chinese characters, hoping that I might recognize them. Sometimes I recognized them, sometimes I did not.

The postmaster, like most Russians that came to Kalgan, was a sportsman and a very good marksman, and frequently gave a pleasant variety to our table by shooting wild ducks and geese. On one occasion he bagged four out of a flock of geese that had alighted on the bank of a small river. This was all the more to his credit as he was short of shot, and had taken to gathering minute pebbles from the road with which to eke out his failing ammunition.

In the matter of provisions we each had our own supply, the only real difficulty being meat. In starting for Kalgan I had a stock of dried mutton; the postmaster had a crateful of chickens. The chickens and the dried mutton ran out simultaneously, when we bought sheep as we found necessary, the postmaster taking the largest share for his numerous family, a smaller portion being allotted to me, and the Mongols coming in for the entrails, which they seemed to consider a great delicacy.

After travelling about three hundred miles, the Mongols made a detour from the straight road to their own home, and furnished us with fresh camels and men, who took us on to Urga, about six hundred miles from Kalgan, where their contract ended. Here, through the kindness of the postmaster, I was hospitably accommodated in the consulate premises for

the two days that elapsed before Mongols and camels could be found to take us the remaining third of our journey to Kiachta.

North of Urga the aspect of the country entirely changes. In place of a great plain destitute of trees, we found a mountainous region clothed with forests, and intersected with streams running through fertile valleys. On leaving Urga we had to provide ourselves with bricks of tea for the purpose of hiring oxen to drag our carts over a mountain pass too steep and too lofty to be accomplished by camels. The loaded camels got over the pass without much difficulty, but so steep were the hills that our carts proved a heavy pull for the strong oxen even that are kept and hired out to assist travellers in crossing the mountains. The whole journey was accomplished in nearly the stipulated time, and without serious misadventure.

But lesser accidents were not wanting. One night I woke up feeling involved in a kind of chaos. My cart had upset, and I was mixed up under most of the things that were inside. It took me some time to scramble out, and when I succeeded I found the Russian soldier making a vigorous assault on the Mongol by whose carelessness the accident had happened. Seeing the 'Commandant' coming up to reinforce his subordinate, I hastened to interpose, and found I was none too soon, for the Mongol had proved no match for the Russian, and had already been severely handled.

One morning, at the end of the stipulated month, we suddenly emerged from a belt of pine forest, and straight before us, seemingly at no great distance, on

the other side of a broad, shallow valley, stood Kiachta. The most prominent feature visible was the church, the dazzling whiteness of whose lofty dome is seen from a great distance, and is the first indication to a traveller crossing the desert from China that he is again nearing civilization.

Kiachta and its white church seemed near, but the distance was greater than it seemed, and some additional delay was caused by a stream in the bottom of the valley, which had too soft a bed to be crossed by camel-carts, and had to be circumnavigated. When Kiachta was at last reached the whole caravan drew up in front of the church, and all the Russian travellers entered to pay their devotions. This done, we marched about a couple of miles into Russian territory, to Troitsko Safska, a town of some three or four thousand inhabitants, where my travelling companions put up at the quarters there prepared for Russian officers on travel. In a few days they continued their journey to some inland part of Siberia.

After the Mongols had been paid and dismissed with suitable presents, one of them, a lama,[1] came back and presented me with a Russian copper coin. The coin was of little intrinsic value, but I was pleased with the gift, taking it as an indication of the man's gratitude for what had been given him. A friend, however, construed the action differently, regarding it not as an acknowledgment of what had been given, but as an advance towards friendship on the part of the Mongol, which I would be expected to meet by returning a silver coin. The conduct of the

[1] A lama is the Mongol name for priest.

lama seemed to agree with this supposition, and as he had already received more than he deserved, I made an end of the case by returning him, with many gestures of politeness, his own copper coin. He took it and departed, seemingly not in the least disconcerted or annoyed by the rejection of his gift.

CHAPTER II.

PICKING UP MONGOLIAN.

Mongolian phrase-book—Mongolian teacher in Kalgan—Mistaken sentence—Note-book and pencil in Buriat tents—An object of suspicion—Buriat teacher in Kiachta—Progress unsatisfactory—Take to the plain—Lama at his prayers—Mongolian lodgings—Suitability of the tent—Manner of study—Progress—Lessons not a success—Purity of the language in the tent—Corrupt nature of general Mongolian conversation—Mode of life in the tent—'Steam of the cold'—Tea—Porridge for 'Our Gilmour'—Dinner—Tripe—Bed—Charcoal—Wood fuel—Tent on fire—Snow and ice melted for water—Lama host goes home—New Mongol lodgings—Quarrel between father and son—Night alarm—Flight—Lodgings in South Mongolia.

BEFORE leaving Peking I had been presented with a 'Road Map of the Route from Peking to Kiachta.' Between Peking and Kalgan this map was useful, but beyond that its use ceased, for the simple reason that of the many roads from Kalgan to Kiachta the map delineated one, and our caravan followed another.

On the margin of the map, however, were printed little groups of Mongol words and phrases, designed to assist the studious traveller in holding communication with the natives of the desert. These served as my first phrase-book of Mongolian. During the two weeks' delay that occurred in Kalgan before Mongols and camels could be found for the desert journey, I took lessons from a Mongol who occupied the post of teacher to the American missionary whose guest I was. In addition to these two helps—the road map and the Mongol teacher—I had paid some attention to Schmidt's Mongol grammar. Before leaving Kalgan I had, through the medium of Chinese, got the Mongol teacher to drill me in the Mongol sentence equivalent to 'I don't speak Mongolian; I am learning it;' and I hoped this would serve me as an introduction to such Mongols as I met, and would perhaps induce them to tell me the words for the common objects and actions of everyday life. These words I was prepared to secure by means of a pencil and a small note-book, always at hand for the purpose. With these slender preparations, linguistic and material, I entered on the desert, eager to pick up any words I could find.

I soon found good reason to remember my Mongol teacher. As I began to understand more of the language, I became aware that in using the sentence which he had given me, and which I had been in the habit of repeating with great satisfaction to most of the Mongols who saluted me, I had not been expressing my desire to *learn* the language, but had been telling all and sundry that I knew and spoke Mongolian!

Of the words on the margin of the map some proved useful, some the Mongols could hardly recognize from my pronunciation—which was not to be wondered at, considering the difficulty of representing their words by English spelling; while some phrases there given were idioms current among a distant tribe, but not commonly used in the native place of the Mongols with whom we were travelling.

The first month after arriving in Siberia was spent in a Buriat-speaking district. I lived in a Russian house, and tried to pick up the language by the help of a teacher, and by going about among the people with a note-book and pencil. In this latter department my success was varying. Some days I picked up many useful words and phrases, on other days I was less successful. I used to enter the tents of the Buriats, who are Mongols settled in Siberia, and, though for the most part politely received, I was in some places regarded with suspicion.

One snowy day I entered a tent, and was getting on well, taking down a number of words from the frank young Buriat who was the owner, when three or four dark-looking men entered, said something to my host, tried to question me, and produced such an impression on the young Buriat that when I attempted to resume the work which their entrance had interrupted he would make no reply but 'Don't know.' It was quite evident that something was wrong, and finding I could do nothing more in that tent, I rose to go. I was aware that my movements were observed, but thought no more of the matter till some time afterwards, when my host came home with a good

story of how some Buriats having fallen in with a nondescript individual, who would give no account of himself, had been on the point of seizing him and forwarding him to the governor of the district. They had not ventured to carry out their intention, but communicated with the local authority, describing the man and stating their own suspicions. He, being aware of my presence in the district, was able to set their minds at rest. I experienced no more suspicion in the course of my word hunting, and on some days I came home more proud of half a pageful of words and phrases than ever was sportsman of a good bag of game.

After a month spent thus I returned to Kiachta, established myself in lodgings, and pursued the study of Mongolian, turning my attention mainly to the reading of the Scriptures, which had been translated into Buriat by Messrs. Stallybrass and Swan. But it was difficult to find a competent teacher, and the incompetent teacher who could be found could come only at an inconvenient time of the day, when he himself seemed exhausted and half asleep. Notwithstanding severe application, it was evident I was not making satisfactory progress.

Matters came to a crisis one night when a friend, after hearing me talk with two lamas who happened to call, remarked that if he had studied Mongolian as long as I had he would have spoken better than I did. I had for some time been dissatisfied with hard work and little progress, and this remark, though made laughingly and without any purpose of influencing my movements, proved the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Next morning, taking my 'Penang lawyer,'[1] to defend myself from dogs, I set out for Kiachta, crossed the frontier into Mongolia, and, after a two hours' walk, reached the tent of a lama whose acquaintance I had made some time before. As I approached the tent I heard the sound of the lama's voice, and when I entered he still continued his devotions, interrupting himself only to say 'Sit' and, with his hand, motion me to a seat. I sat down, and no further notice was taken of my presence for ten or fifteen minutes, when, having finished his prayers, he hastened to salute me as if I had just entered.

After tea had been produced and we had talked some time, I told him the object of my visit, namely, that I wanted to live in his tent and learn Mongolian from him as my teacher. He was quite willing, his main difficulty being that his tent was a poor one; he was afraid that I would freeze, and that he could furnish me with nothing better than Mongol fare, which he supposed I would not relish. In reply to his question when I would begin, I said 'At once,' and receiving his assent I felt that I was established as an inmate of a Mongol tent.

Next morning he accompanied me to my lodgings in Kiachta, that I might bring some bedding, etc., and on the road we came to an arrangement as to terms. He agreed to board, lodge, and teach me for a sum that amounted to a little over one shilling a day. From that time I used to divide the week

[1] A 'Penang lawyer' is a heavy walking-stick, supposed to be so called from its usefulness in settling disputes in Penang.

between my Russian and Mongolian lodgings, spending three, or four, or five days in the tent, and the remainder in civilization.

Everything about the tent was wonderfully suited to my needs. The lama who owned it was some two hundred miles from home, so we were not troubled by superfluous members of his family. He was only temporarily located there, and had no dog, so I could go out and in as I liked. He was rich, so could afford to keep a good fire burning, a luxury which could not have been enjoyed in the tent of a poor man. His business required him to keep two or three men-servants about him; and as a man of his position could not but have good tea always on hand—a great attraction in the desert—the tent was seldom without conversation going on in it between two or three Mongols.

This last—conversation carried on by Mongols just as if no one had been listening—was exactly what I wanted, and I used to sit, pencil and note-book in hand, and take down such words and phrases as I could catch. Exclamations and salutations made by and to persons entering and leaving the tent; remarks made about and to neighbours and visitors; directions given to servants about herding, cooking, and mending the fire, were caught in their native freshness and purity and transferred to my note-book. In the quiet intervals of the day or evening, I would con over again and again what I had caught.

Learning the language in this way, I soon could speak a good deal more than I could understand or my teacher could explain to me. Though I could

not parse the phrases, nor even separate out the words of which they were composed, much less understand the meaning of what I said, I knew when and how to use them, and could hardly help having the accent correct, and could not avoid learning first those words and phrases which were in most common use. Thus, with only a fraction of the labour I had spent over books, I soon began to feel that I was making good progress.

I fear that my teacher did not find my conduct at all satisfactory. I had anticipated great benefit from his instruction, and one of the inducements that took me to his tent was the fact that I knew him to be a good Mongol scholar, able to read, write, and explain well. He, too, had conscientious ideas of the duty he owed me as teacher, and a few days after taking up my residence with him, he called upon me to receive my first formal lesson. This and the one or two following attempts that were made did not prove a success. As soon as he began to teach me he spoke in such a stilted fashion that I could make nothing of it; my not understanding annoyed him, his insisting in speaking in that style annoyed me; we both got vexed with each other, and had to give it up. Subsequent attempts proved no better, and after a few such lessons I avoided them. Whenever I saw him getting ready to teach me, I used to pick up my 'Penang lawyer' and go for a two hours' walk. By the time I returned he either was busy or had forgotten his intention, and I escaped for the day. To those who had mastered the colloquial there could not have been a more efficient teacher of the written

language, but his attempts then to teach me the mysteries of writing were premature and labour spent in vain.

A slight drawback to learning a language by repeating everything that any one happens to say is, that some of the phrases so picked up are not very choice. As the language begins to be understood any impropriety in a phrase soon becomes apparent, and can be avoided. It is something to say for the purity of the ordinary conversation carried on in that tent, that of all the numerous sentences thus learnt indiscriminately, I found only two, on fuller acquaintance with the language, to be unfit for use. Of these the more objectionable was after all very harmless, and the other was more absurd than objectionable, while both were perfectly free from any taint of impurity.

Yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that the ordinary conversation of Mongols is pure. Very far from it. In addition to a great many sayings and expressions that would shock civilized ears, but which are due more to the unsophisticated nature of their manners and customs than to any impurity of mind and thought, there is in daily use a vast amount of impure language for which no excuse can be found, and which is simply the expression of corrupt thought. Often in after years, when hearing loathsome language, I have wondered how it was that I heard so little of it when living in the lama's tent. One reason doubtless was that vile conversation frequently hides itself under inuendo, and for the most part is indirect, so that a learner would not be likely to catch it sufficiently clearly to be able to write it down. Another

reason may have been that seeing there was 'a chield among them taking notes,' they were somewhat on their guard. But both these reasons taken together are not sufficient to account for the purity of their talk, and I am fain to believe that it was mainly owing to the good sense and decency of my lama host, whose general bearing and presence were a rebuke to such iniquity, and who ruled his house better than to allow its inmates to indulge in the sin of wicked conversation.

A few words about our mode of life in the tent will illustrate the manners and customs of the northern Mongols. At dawn the serving-lama rose and lit the fire. As soon as the flame blazed, slow streams of white mist became visible converging towards the fire from holes and seams in the felt sides of the tent. The Mongols call this the 'steam of the cold,' and they were correct enough, for this phenomenon was visible only in the intense cold of the depth of winter. The question is, what caused it? Had it been *vice versâ*, the vapour in hot air condensing in colder air, it would not have been at all mysterious. In Kiachta, when the door of a warm room communicating directly with the cold atmosphere outside is suddenly opened, the hot air is seen to flow out like a cloud of steam, and this is just what might be expected; but why should cold air entering a tent condense its moisture to the point of visibility? It was remarkable, too, that this phenomenon was never witnessed except in the morning, and lasted only for a few minutes, say ten or fifteen, after the fire first blazed up.

As soon as the fire had somewhat warmed the tent,

the other inmates got up and dressed. Meantime, the servant put the pot on the fire, and placed in it a block of ice or a pyramid of snow. When this had melted, the scum and sediment were removed, and the water thus purified put on to boil, a handful of pounded brick tea being thrown on the surface. After ten or fifteen minutes' hard boiling, kept in check by occasional use of the ladle, the tea was poured into a pail, the pot swept out with a wisp of the hairs of a horse's tail, a little fat melted in the pot, the cracklings carefully removed, enough meal added to make the compound into a kind of porridge, after a time more meal added and well stirred till the mass seemed brown and dryish, then the tea, cleared from the sediment, poured in and boiled up, and the 'meal-tea' was pronounced ready. This rather elaborate process of adding fat and meal was gone through to supply the lack of milk. The lama had no cows with him, and I think that during the whole of that winter I saw milk in his tent only once, when some one presented him with a frozen piece of it, looking very much like a small cheese.

This meal-tea in the morning, and again at noon, was the only food partaken of by the Mongols till sunset, and the only exception I had them make in my favour was to secure for myself a cupful of the flour when it had reached the stage in which it resembled porridge. This they called 'Scotland,' and set aside for the use of 'Our Gilmour.'

About sunset the servant, glancing up to the hole in the roof as to a clock, would say, 'Shall I make dinner?' The lama, nothing loth, would say, 'Make

it.' The servant needed no urging, and I, as guest, looked on with interest. Outside the tent was a strong dog-proof kind of cage, into which had been put the whole winter's stock of beef, mutton, and tripe. There it needed no salting. The frost kept it perfectly fresh, and so hard that the portions used for each meal had to be hewn off with a hatchet. Enough to serve the wants of the lama and myself was hewn off and boiled, then fished out with the fire-tongs and put into a basin or on a board. My host and myself appropriated pieces, which we ate by the help of a knife only, in true Mongol style.

While we were thus having our first course, some millet was thrown into the pot in which the meat had been boiled, in a short time was pronounced cooked, and formed our second course. The meat was frequently tough and difficult to manage, but this second course of millet boiled in soup and served up rather thin was always grateful, and I have seldom before or since tasted any preparation of civilized cookery that proved so delicious. The excellence of this soup consisted, I suppose, not so much in itself as in its surroundings. Among the most ordinary articles of civilized diet it would, I doubt not, rank low indeed; but with desert hunger, one meal a day, and everything else dirty and badly cooked, this well-cooked millet was indeed a delicacy.

As soon as our meal was over the servants set about theirs. A huge mass of tripe, wrapped up in the stomach of a sheep and frozen solid, was brought in from the outdoor larder, attacked vigorously with a hatchet, and the detached fragments put on to boil

in the pot. To see what it was like, I insisted one evening in taking my dinner with the men, but I must say it did not prove a very satisfactory adventure. The men, poor fellows! seemed to relish it greatly, and used to devour large quantities.

However cold the weather might be, these evening dinners were always a hot time both for master and men. The fire was piled up to give light, the food taken was excessively hot, and under these circumstances it was not easy to keep cool. A Mongol, indeed, does not seem to suppose that he receives full benefit from his dinner if the eating of it does not make him perspire profusely.

Most Mongols retire to rest immediately after the evening meal, but my host was a great exception to the rule in this respect, and used to sit by the fire till ten or eleven o'clock, sometimes even till midnight. When at length he did go to bed, it was the duty of the servant to see him snugly tucked into his sheepskin coat, and it used to sound strange to hear the master indicating, in Mongol fashion, by the points of the compass, the places where the tucking in was deficient.

After the master had been properly tucked, and I had drawn on sheepskin boots, buttoned up my great-coat to the chin, tied down the ear-flaps of my fur cap, and been covered up with a couple of Scotch plaids, the last act of the day was performed. The tent was closed above, the door was made fast, and a large jar filled with charcoal was produced. The charcoal was made by the care of the men throughout the day, who, during their spare time as they sat by

the fire, kept rescuing and quenching the glowing embers of the wood as it burned in the grate. Each piece, as it was quenched, was thrown into this jar, and after everything was made fast at night the whole contents were piled in one heap on the fire. In a few minutes there was a splendid glow, and, for the only time perhaps in the twenty-four hours, the atmosphere of the tent was really hot. Every one used to lie and look at it with a glow of satisfaction and gradually drop off to sleep. In a room such a proceeding would have been dangerous, but in our tent danger there was none. Even after every exertion to stop draughts and close up holes, there was more than sufficient ventilation to have frustrated a much more determined attempt to produce asphyxia.

Argol, the dried dung of animals, is the common fuel of Mongolia. In our tent wood was used exclusively, because we were near a forest, and my teacher, having men and horses at command, could have the wood carted more easily than he could have had the argol gathered. Wood is in some respects nicer to use as fuel, but it has one disadvantage—it gives off little explosions, which drive sparks on to the clothes of those sitting around, and even sometimes sets fire to the roof of the tent.

One night, when a stranger lama, who was our guest, was talking with me about Christianity, I had occasion to point upwards, and in a moment the whole tent was in an uproar. Following the direction indicated by my hand, they had looked up and seen that a spark had ignited the roof, and spreading over the soot-covered felt, had made a glowing patch

as large as a man's hand. The fire was rapidly spreading, and every one instantaneously proceeded to put into execution a method for extinguishing it, at the same time shouting lustily to the others to hand him such things as he wanted. Unfortunately, all the Mongols present were short of stature, and, though the tent was not a tall one, none of them could reach the burning spot, all the more so, as it was directly over the blazing fire. Several attempts made at extinguishing it had been ineffectual, the glowing patch was rapidly spreading, and the excitement in the tent every moment increasing, when our lama guest in the confusion seized a ladle and began to dash water on the sooty roof. For the most part he missed his aim, and the inky water descending in a shower drove everybody else off the field, and sent them cowering into the sides of the tent, uttering shouts of protestation, and vainly endeavouring to protect their clothes. The burning soot was finally scraped down with a stick, and the lamas again resumed their places round the fire, regarding with rueful looks the black marks spattered all over their red coats.

The water used in the tent throughout the winter was procured by melting ice or snow. As the snow is gathered at no great distance from the tent, it is liable to contain all manner of impurities, and sometimes at the bottom of the pot in which the melting has taken place are found things which anybody but a Mongol would consider very objectionable.

The ice-water is much more satisfactory. It is usually brought from some lake where the water is

clean, and being transparent any piece containing impurity can be seen and rejected. One of the pretty sights to be seen in the courtyards of Chinese places of business in Kiachta is the great square stacks of clean, transparent, crystal-looking ice, piled up in the shade of some wall, and forming the water supply of the firm during winter.

Russians out of doors, and Mongols always, protect themselves by wearing skin robes. I neglected this precaution, and, even in the Mongol tent, deemed warm underclothing and a great-coat sufficient. I had to pay for my temerity afterwards, and should have spared myself much discomfort if I had only followed the sensible advice and example of Russians and Mongols, and encased myself in a sheepskin. Even in my noonday walks a damp handkerchief would freeze in the pocket, and I would return to the tent with beard and moustache a mass of icicles, formed by the congealed moisture of the breath. The nights were of course much colder, but in their great sheepskin robes and shaggy goatskin overcoats the Mongols seemed to stand it well, and might be heard singing cheerily in the middle of the night, as the long strings of tea-laden camels defiled past our tent, crunching the frozen snow under their broad feet.

Towards spring my lama teacher finished his business, broke up his establishment, and returned home. Circumstances prevented me accepting his invitation to accompany him to Urga. I was very sorry not to be able to go with him, but it was well I did not. I learned afterwards that they had an exceedingly hard journey, and, notwithstanding their skin coats, suf-

fered much from the cold. It is needless to say that had I accompanied them without furs I should have suffered much more. We parted with deep regret and kindly feelings; we had all got to like each other, and I have no doubt that the Mongols often look back to that winter with pleasure, and tell with glee doings and sayings of the foreigner whom they always spoke of as 'Our Gilmour.'

After experiencing how easy it was to get on with Mongolian by living in a Mongol tent, I could not rest till I had installed myself in another. The circumstances and surroundings of this second tent were much less favourable for my purpose than those of the first; but after all I had not much reason to complain, when an unlooked-for incident put an end to my residence there, and sent me back to Kiachta.

My teacher was a young layman, who held some small appointment in the *yamen*,[1] and lived in a tent close to the father who had adopted him. The two did not get on harmoniously. The wife of the father stirred up mischief, and, primed from this source, the old man would come into his son's tent and scold him by the half-hour together. Though unpleasant in one sense, this was not without its benefit for me in helping me to acquire the language, and during those scenes I used to enrich my note-book with a number of energetic phrases and sentences.

One night the quarrel assumed a more serious shape, the father was more excited and determined, and because the son refused to manœuvre matters in the yamen so as to let the father have some advantage

[1] Yamen is the Chinese word for government office

about an old horse, he declared he would not leave his son's tent, but live there and be a burden to him, and, pointing to the dinner cooking in the pot, declared his intention of beginning by eating that.

Just when the dinner was ready he got up and left, threatening, however, to come back and end the quarrel by means of the knife. I thought that it was all empty bravado, but the son was alarmed, said I did not know his father, and assured me that the old man was in earnest, and meant what he said. Under these circumstances the meal went off so poorly that it would have been small loss if the father had remained and carried out his threat of eating it. After dinner the young man could not rest, but kept pacing about on a little piece of felt, talking most seriously and philosophically about death and its consequences. By-and-by he settled down, and, as things seemed quiet, we all retired to rest.

We had not been long in bed when the stillness of the night was broken by a great uproar in the tent of the father. He had got his knife, and was coming to finish the quarrel, but was meantime being detained by the females of his household, who clung to him and shrieked with all their might. Instantly the son sprang up and darted out, and I, thinking that the infuriated Mongol with his knife in his hand in the small tent, and without a light, might mistake me for his son, soon followed him. Without waiting for my boots—the only particular in which I was undressed—I rushed out, and found my companion standing in a fierce north wind, with no covering but a sheepskin, and, as the uproar still continued, I

started at a run for the nearest tents, which were not far off. Before I had gone far I became conscious that some one was behind me, and could not make out whether it was the son following my example, or the father mistaking me for his son. As soon as I reached the tent, in place of entering, I ran round to the back of it, and waited till my pursuer came up. He called to the inmates, and, recognizing the voice as that of the son, we entered together. A skin was offered me, my boots were brought, and I was soon asleep. In a little while I woke up to hear the voice of the father in the tent. He was borrowing an ox and cart to move his tent and goods. In the morning I learned that the son had gone into hiding; and when, in the afternoon, I came with a conveyance to remove my things, I found that the father had carried off his tent and all his belongings, and disappeared from the neighbourhood. In this abrupt way closed my second term of tent life in Mongolia.

After I began making evangelistic tours, I had good opportunities of picking up further acquaintance with the language, while yet enjoying the comparative cleanliness and comfort of my own travelling tent; but these opportunities are not for a moment to be compared to those that I enjoyed as a silent listener in another man's tent.

CHAPTER III.

LEARNING TO RIDE.

First lessons—Mongols ride with short stirrups—A six hundred mile ride—Buying a whip—The start—Crossing the Tola in flood—A Mongol's exhortation—Camping out—Dreams—Fall—Rat pits—Mending harness—Mode of journey—Hospitality of the poor better than that of the rich—Inhabitants—Influenza—Animals in tents—We prefer to camp out—Guide bewildered at his native place—Find a trail—Guide's home—Character of a guide—Reputation among his countrymen—New guide—Rainless district—Change to camels—Camels and horses compared—'Have you a revolver?'—Mending a camel's foot—Gobi—A hill with one side—A thirsty ride—Stones of Gobi—A tent at last—Tea in the desert—Enchanted land—Stony illusion—Recollection of Gobi like a nightmare—Progress in learning to ride—Snatches of sleep—A green land—Miss our way—'What shop do you belong to?'—Kalgan.

AS a traveller in Mongolia must be something of a horseman, I was eager to take lessons in riding, and a Mongol friend used to indulge me occasionally, by causing to be caught and saddled for me such an old quiet beast as the aged grandmother or the very young children of the family were in the habit of riding.

In a country where children are sometimes expert riders soon after passing the age of infancy, a *man* who could not ride was considered a great novelty; and when the steed was led up, the whole community

would turn out to enjoy the spectacle of my awkwardness in mounting. As the Mongols ride with the stirrup straps so short that a foreigner's legs become cramped, I used, when practicable, to have them lengthened, and then their wonder was not that I should find difficulty in mounting, but that I should be able to mount at all.

These occasional rides, however, did not go far towards making me a horseman; so being at Urga, and under the necessity of crossing the desert to Kalgan, I got a Mongol to contract to convey me thither on horseback, hoping, among other things, that a ride of this length—six hundred English miles—would do something towards making me feel comfortable in a saddle.

My Mongol contractor was to provide a saddled horse, but I had to find my own whip. Giving a lama a brick of tea, I sent him out to the market to make the best bargain he could. He soon returned with a heavy club-looking piece of wood, about twenty inches long, tapered a little, with a cowhide lash attached to the lighter end and a loop of light thong running through a hole in the heavier end. The hand is thrust through the loop, and, when not in use, the whip hangs from the wrist, leaving the hand free. When the whip is wanted it is thus always ready: simply close the hand, and the whip is grasped.

I was a little astonished at the weight of the thing at first, but the Mongols assured me it was all the better for that. Should a robber come, I was just to grasp the lash and the thick end of the whip, give him a good crack on the head, and the robber would

have the worst of it. They were not far wrong. One good blow, delivered as directed, would almost have smashed a man's skull.

After many delays everything was declared ready for the start, the horses were led out, I scrambled up, and we rode slowly off, among the last words I heard uttered being expressions of opinion from the spectators to the effect that, if I could not mount a horse better than that, I was not likely to reach Kalgan by horseback. We soon reached the north bank of the Tola, and found that river in flood, not very high, however, flowing with a beautiful clear stream, but rather cold to the touch, as most of the increase in its volume was caused by the melting of snow. The ordinary ford was a little too deep, so we went a little higher up, to a place where the river was broader and more rapid, and therefore shallower. Here we found a flock of sheep being transported over the river in a fashion truly Mongol, but perhaps the only way possible under the circumstances. They were tied two and two, dragged a little beyond the centre of the river by a man mounted on a camel, then let go. They drifted rapidly down with the current, but struggled towards the bank, and were finally secured, dripping and shivering. After looking to our saddle-girths, and drawing up our feet till we were almost kneeling in the saddle, we pushed in. The water came high up the horses' sides, but my guide was used to such things, and I got on very well by keeping my horse close under the lee of his. As soon as we got over we dropped our feet into the stirrups, laughed at the adventure, and rode on, knowing that, whatever

difficulties we might meet, we had no more rivers to ford for the rest of the six hundred miles.

That evening we had dinner in the tent of a mutual friend, who escorted us for some miles in the dark, and then proceeded to take a most affectionate and pious farewell of us, exhorting me to pray to my God, and he would pray to his. When in his tent my contractor had vainly endeavoured to buy horses, and when our friend impressed upon him the necessity for prayer and its helpful nature in a journey like that on which we were entering, adding that he would pray for us, the disappointed man turned himself round in his saddle, and said, with great energy, 'If you had sold us a couple of horses cheap, it would have helped us on our journey a great deal better than praying.'

In the contract, which had been carefully drawn out and signed, it had been stipulated that my guide was to find tents in which I could sleep at night. We rode on till about eleven o'clock, when suddenly my guide's horse left the road and began to describe a semicircle. On my calling out and asking what all this meant, it appeared that the rider had been fast asleep in the saddle; he woke up with a start, looked about him in a bewildered manner, and asked, 'Where are we? From what direction did we come?' A little after we came to a knoll near which was some good grass. Here I was called upon to dismount, the saddles were taken off, the horses fettered, and thus, sheltered from the north wind, we were to sleep out on the wild. The proper way of 'retiring to rest' in such circumstances is to place the saddle for a pillow, set up the saddle-bags as a

screen from the wind, spread the saddle felt for a mattress, put on all warm gloves, cravats, etc., that come to hand, cover up with any rugs you may have, and wish for the morning.

A hungry man, it is said, dreams of feasts; I was a cold man that night, and my dream was of a nice warm bedroom with a good bed and a cheery fire. So real was the vision that I awoke saying, 'If I had only had this some time ago coming from Urga.' I looked about, and saw the dim horizon over the distant mountains, heard the horses grazing near, listened to the snoring of the Mongol, and realized that we were out on the desert.

When daylight came we caught our horses and started, but had gone only a very short distance when my horse's fore-feet sunk into the earth, and as we were going at a smart pace and down hill he was unable to recover himself. For some yards he staggered along, and then came down, throwing me on my head with a shock that was all the more painful on account of the chill and stiff state I was in, through not having got warmed up after the cold of the night.

The fall was occasioned by my having allowed my horse to ride over a hollow piece of ground. These treacherous parts are the trouble of riders in Mongolia. A little rat-like animal excavates galleries underground, and a horse passing over one of these must go through. These dangerous spots are usually distinguished by a different colour and appearance from the rest of the ground, but sometimes even a practised eye may be at fault, and a few moments' inattention is enough to bring down the best horse and rider.

Just before spring, sometimes, large tracts of the desert are fired accidentally from the unextinguished fires left by passing caravans, and purposely by the natives, that the new grass may grow up better and free from the old. In these burnt tracts it is almost impossible to distinguish the hollowed spots, and a few days later in this ride, while passing over a burnt district, my guide had his fall. He was before me, and we were going at a rapid rate when, all of a sudden, I saw his horse with its head towards me, its four feet in the air, and its rider undermost. My guide was a large man, and was considerably crushed, but it is strange that he was not more hurt by so bad a fall. Both the saddle-girths were burst, but, true to his Mongol instinct, the rider held fast to the halter, and did not let his horse go.

After a little he recovered from the effects of his fall, picked up his scattered belongings, and set about repairing his broken saddle-girths. As we had no spare strings or straps with us, and were far away from human habitations, I wondered how he would make good the damage. I was not left long in suspense; without hesitation he at once took a handful of hair from the tail of his horse, twisted and plaited it together, and in a few minutes the straps were as strong as ever. As the tails of the horses are allowed to grow to the ground, a Mongol horseman on a journey is never at a great loss for a string; careless in the extreme, he is apt to forget anything that can be left behind, but when needed the tail of his horse is never far to seek.

For some days we rode on, sleeping out on the

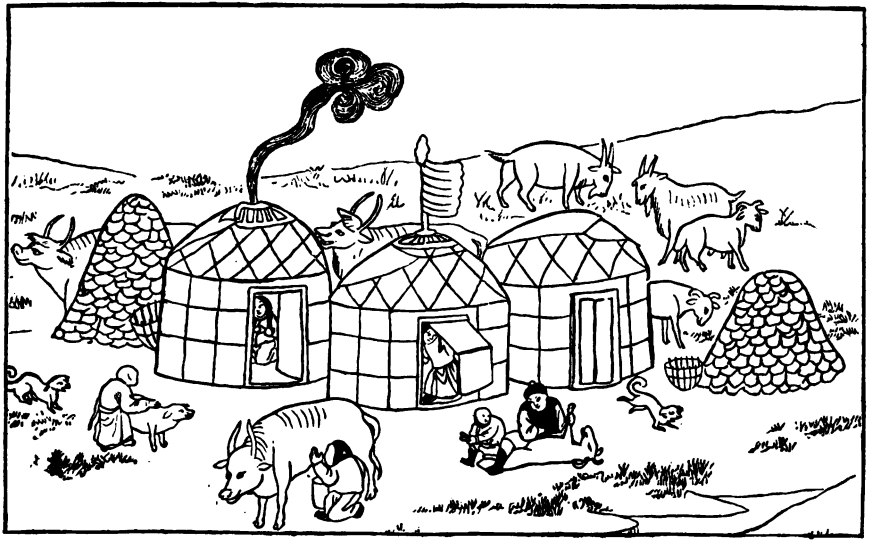
plain, dismounting about midnight to feel the grass with our hands, hobbling our horses, and 'turning in' as soon as we found good pasture. About dawn we resumed our journey, drawing up at some tent about sunrise for our morning tea. Later on we stopped at some tent for breakfast, and towards evening again halted for dinner. With about two exceptions we were treated with great kindness. The 'pot and ladle' were put at our service, and in most cases our tea made and our food cooked for us, no remuneration being expected, asked, or given, beyond a little tea, or the leavings of our meals, which, with this object in view, was always more abundant than was necessary to supply the wants of two travellers. We found that we fared much more economically, and were better treated, and received with a much warmer welcome, in the tents of the poor than in the abodes of the rich. A rich man would make us wait his convenience, and expect us to make extra good tea or a meal which, both as regards quantity and quality, would be in keeping with his dignity and status, and even then we left feeling that our visit had been something of an intrusion. In the tents of the poor, on the other hand, we were warmly welcomed, our tea or food was prepared at once and in all haste, our animals were looked to as they grazed, the share of food which we left in the pot was considered a rich reward, and when all was over we were conducted forth and sent on our way again with many expressions of friendship and good wishes for the prosperity of our journey.

Some of these tents at which we put up seemed very

poor and very lonely. One contained almost nothing but the skins of sheep which had died through hard weather; another was the abode of a man suffering and bent down by a spinal disease, but who had a quick and eager mind, which made him welcome us, as sources of information and news about the places we had come from and passed through; many of them were the abodes of women whose husbands were away on distant caravan journeys, while they themselves remained at home caring for the children and a small flock of goats, the kids of which, finding nothing to satisfy their climbing instincts in the flat desert, kept continually leaping on to the roof of the tent, only to be chased off by one of the children; and almost all of the poorer sort seemed destitute of tea, a want which they sought to supply by boiling again the spent remains of the pounded leaves and twigs of which brick tea is composed.

In one district we had to ride a long stretch of many miles without entering a tent. As often as we drew up at a tent a woman or man would come out and say, 'Dismount at my tent at another time; we have the cough." This cough seemed to be a kind of influenza much dreaded by the Mongols. As far as I can learn, it seldom proves fatal, but travellers are careful to avoid it, and no one would think of using the 'pot and ladle' of a family suffering from this sickness.

We slept a few of the nights in tents, but I soon ceased to find fault with being compelled to sleep out in the wild. Every day took us farther into summer, and fifty or sixty miles nearer to the equator; the



A MONGOL CAMP. [*From a Native Sketch.*

weather was mild, and the temperature soon became sensibly warmer. There is, moreover, one phenomenon of tent life which is not agreeable to a foreigner—the presence at night of calves, lambs, and kids. A poor Mongol shares his tent at night with the young of his animals, and, for the most part, finds it agreeable. With them the tent is warmer, and he and his family can sleep with less to cover them, and so little repugnance seems to be felt towards them that the tents of the rich even are seldom without two or three young calves tethered near the door, which seem quite at home, and spend most of their waking hours in licking everything within their reach. In cold and stormy weather any tent, even with calves, lambs, and kids, is better than outside; but in summer, with no rain and a mild temperature, a traveller moderately provided with warm clothing finds the coolness and freshness and freedom of the open plain preferable, at least for the few nights he is engaged in crossing it. This feeling grew as the journey went on, and towards the end of it, on the southern side of the desert, I was quite as enthusiastically in favour of outside lodgings as my guide.

After five days' ride we reached the native place of the lama who was conveying me through the desert. We did not arrive till nearly midnight, and though, as it afterwards proved, we were within about a couple of miles of his tent, we narrowly escaped sleeping out in the wild. A day or two before we had been rescued from a similar difficulty by the bark of a dog, but though we shouted no dog would answer; the night was dull, and we could find no

mark of any kind that indicated where we were or where we should go. To make matters worse, we had left the great road in the afternoon, and for some time had been running across country. Though close to his own home, the lama was quite bewildered. In Gobi no wood grows. The Mongols have, therefore, to buy in Kalgan or Urga the long fishing-rod-like birch poles used in catching their horses. As these poles are too long to carry on a camel, it is usual to tie them up into a bundle, fix one end to a camel, and let the other trail on the ground. A day or two before we had noticed a caravan with such a bundle of rods, going south, and the Mongol, as he rode hither and thither in the dark, detected in the sand the trail of this bundle of rods, and shouted out, with great glee, that we were all right, he knew all about it. Taking his bearings from that slender trail, we set off at full speed, and were soon in his home, the lama the centre of a rapidly increasing company, which hastened to greet him on his return from a lengthened residence in the temple in which he held office in Urga, I drinking milk fresh from the cow, to the amazement of the on-lookers, who here, as everywhere else, were loud in the expression of their astonishment that any one should drink milk 'raw,' and not boiled, as their universal custom is.

We had been but a few minutes in when the lama told me he was done up, that he could not go farther with me, and that he would send me on in the care of his younger brother, who was not a lama, but a 'black man,' as the Mongols denominate a layman. I called upon him to produce the man for my inspec-

tion, when he arrived drew him close up to the fire till the light fell full on his face, asked him a few questions, and, amid the laughter of the whole assembly, pronounced him 'passable,' and said I was willing to go on under his care.

This change of guides was directly contrary to the expressed terms of the contract, in which it had been stipulated that the lama was himself personally to escort me all the way to Kalgan. Though I had, for the sake of appearances, to grumble a little at this open violation of the bargain, I was secretly so exceedingly glad of the change that I could with difficulty conceal my satisfaction.

Soon after leaving Urga I had, thinking to expedite matters, on one occasion caught and saddled my horse myself. From that time onwards the lama took it for granted that I would in future make no calls upon him for help in the many menial attentions that have to be paid to a traveller's horse.

When we happened to stop for tea or a meal at tents with the inmates of which he was acquainted, he would relate to them how he had bought, at Urga, for them tea, tobacco, matches, etc., but that through my niggardliness he had been compelled to part with them in bartering for horses to carry us on our journey, always taking care in his narrations to let it seem as if his taking me through the desert was not a commercial speculation, on which he had ventured in the hope of making a profit, so much as a deed of charity which he was performing for my benefit.

Most Mongols are in the habit of lying more or less, but this man seemed to have so steeped himself

in untruth as to be unable to suppose that any one else spoke the truth in circumstances where a lie would be advantageous. Before leaving Urga I had provided myself with a pair of spectacles, pieces of common blue glass set in wire gauze, poor cheap things that even in remote regions, such as Kiachta and Urga, cost only a trifle, but which are of great use in shading the eyes from the glare of the sun on snow or desert. For convenience sake I carried them fastened with their elastic band on to my hat. Soon after leaving Urga, either in a fall from my horse, or in a tent where we had rested, the spectacles were lost. I was grieved at the loss, and the fierce glare of the sun on the sandy soil was so strong that it brought on an affection of the eye that did not leave me for months after the ride was finished.

My lama had tender eyes and suffered a good deal on the ride. He called for the spectacles. I told him they were lost. Measuring me by himself he supposed that I was merely telling a lie to avoid lending them to him, and throughout the remainder of the time that we were together he lost few opportunities of complaining to people of the badness of the man he had with him, asserting that I had in my baggage a good pair of spectacles which I would not lend him though I was not using them myself. From the frequency and earnestness with which he repeated this tale, I have no doubt that he sincerely believed it, and after a few remonstrances I gave him up and let him believe his own lie. By telling this story perhaps he secured the sympathy of the listeners, and he had such a fund of falsehood with which he used to set

himself off in a good light, that any hearer who believed one-half of what the lama said could hardly help having the feeling which one of them gave expression to when he remarked, 'There goes a meritorious lama.'

It might be supposed that a man like this would soon be seen through and despised by his countrymen; but, on the contrary, it seemed that he was held in high esteem. He was ignorant and uneducated, so much so that he could not sign his own name in Mongolian, or even in Tibetan, though every lama pretending to any standing at all is supposed to be familiar with the latter language; yet he held quite an honourable office in a temple in Urga.

I was glad to hear that I was now to part company with this man who had made himself so disagreeable; and realizing the fact that I had ridden out one Mongol, and was in the morning to continue my ride pitted against a fresh man, I called for silence in the tent, ordered a sheep to be bought, killed, and put into shape for carrying, fixed the hour at which we were to start, and turned in to sleep.

Next day I was careful to render no assistance to my guide in the matter of managing the horses, and I was glad to find that throughout the journey he never expected me to do anything but allow myself to be looked after and cared for. I soon found, however, that another article of the contract was to be infringed. It had been stipulated that horses alone were to be used, but no rain had fallen in Gobi, and it was pleaded that, not having foreseen this, it was impossible without suffering great loss to cross Gobi with

horses. With my consent, therefore, camels were procured, and mounted on these lofty steeds, we for some days and nights paced slowly through a dry and barren land, where no new grass had grown, where there seemed little old grass, and where the cattle gladly picked up such stray pieces of withered grass as were blown about over the desert, and collected in hollows and little ravines.

The camels were very sure-footed, so much so that though they frequently stumbled they never once fell, even when they sunk into a rat-gallery; and, though the motion was unpleasant and the progress slow, they were very comfortable at night. Unlike horses, camels do not feed at night; so when we wanted to go to sleep we had only to draw them up broadside to the wind, make them lie down, and lie down ourselves on their lee-side, sheltered by their friendly protection.

My first guide had been much annoyed at what he believed to be the lie I told about my spectacles; my second guide soon complained of what he believed to be the truth which I told about my revolver. I had none, and, whenever asked, said frankly that I travelled unarmed. My guide being timid, remonstrated with me for thus betraying my defenceless state to all inquirers, and urged me to tell a lie about it and say that I was armed. On my declining to do this he rode on for a time in silence and apparently in deep thought, then proposed, as the result of his cogitations, that when asked if I had a revolver I should reply, 'Supposing I have, what then? supposing I have not, what then?' I saw no harm in this form of answer, agreed to use it, and have often since

staved off in the same manner impertinent questions of troublesome Mongols.

I have no doubt that by frankly saying I had no revolver I reaped the full advantage of protection that the possession of firearms is supposed to confer on a traveller in the desert. Most Russians whom the Mongols meet carry revolvers, and when the Mongols heard me denying that I had one, most of them supposed that I was simply following their custom, and telling a lie to avoid the trouble of showing it, or to escape being importuned to give them powder; and one man, in whose tent we drank tea towards the close of our journey, made an earnest and persistent attempt to overcome what he regarded as my reluctance to oblige him by supplying him with foreign gunpowder.

After the camels had travelled some days the soles of their feet began to wear through to the quick in one or two places, and had to be mended! The animal was thrown over on his side, his feet put up on a low stool, and the tender part covered by a patch of leather, which was held in its place by thin thongs drawn through the adjacent callosities of the sole. The animal's foot was mended very much as a cobbler mends a shoe.

Before dismissing Gobi a few words of description may not be out of place. One day as we rode along we found a high hill straight in front of us. The summit seemed a good way off to look at, but proved even more distant to reach. Near the top were some women gathering argol, and it appeared rather strange that they should be so occupied so high up above the plain. When the top was reached it was found that

there was no descent on the other side; by this sudden rise we had ascended to a table-land, and it was explained to me that we were now in Gobi.

I saw Gobi under the most disadvantageous circumstances. No rain had fallen, no grass had grown; there was nothing but sand and stones with last year's grass dried and brown, and very little even of that. Here and there were the ghost-like remnants of last year's growth of spear-grass, scorched with the sun and bleached with the weather; and the general desolation of the scenery was, if possible, enhanced by the appearance of black rocks which cropped up in perpendicular layers.

Not only was the dryness of the season apt to leave an unfavourable impression of the place, but, through the mismanagement of my Mongol guide, our ride over the part which remains most vividly imprinted on my memory was performed in great discomfort.

We had eaten no food and drunk no tea since the day before, and found ourselves, late in the morning, riding from one scene of desolation into another, if possible, still more desolate, and hour after hour we seemed to be coming no nearer the end. The sun mounted higher and higher, till, blazing in his strength, the heat became oppressive. My sun-hat was a protection from above, but from the grassless gravel and sand beneath there glared up a fierce light and heat from which there was no protection. Stretch after stretch of country we passed, but still no wells, no tents, no inhabitants. At last we left all traces of man and beast, left the road even, and entered on fresh scenes of more intense desolation, passing among rocks

rough and black that broke through the ground in all directions, rugged and frowning.

Emerging from this we suddenly came upon a stretch of ground almost literally covered with the far-famed stones of Gobi. The prevailing colour was a kind of misty, half-transparent white, exactly like arrowroot or cornflour prepared with water only. Besides these were stones of other colours, including, if I remember aright, red, green, and blue. It was like a fairy scene. The stones were strewn almost as thickly as they could lie. Seen under other circumstances we might have brought away samples of them, but, as we then were situated, neither of us cared a straw for them. The Mongol muttered something about a place where better stone could be found. This he did, I suppose, afraid lest I should dismount to pick up specimens. If so his device was superfluous. It was not stones I wanted, but the delicious dirty Mongol tea. Just when I began to fear that the utmost limit of endurance was almost reached, having drunk nothing for eighteen hours, the roof of a tent was espied at last, and we were soon seated inside drinking tea.

To any one who has not experienced a long-continued, fierce, burning, desert thirst, it is quite impossible to convey any idea of the relief that tea brings. Its virtues are wonderful. It is itself wretched stuff. No civilized man in any civilized country would drink it. But in the desert it is a different thing. The frank welcome and the tea, which is given unasked and as a matter of course, seem to revive nature's exhausted powers, and speedily put to flight the remembrances of a painful ride. It may seem strange that a

hungry man should sit down and drink mere tea, 'empty tea,' as the Mongols would call it, without bread or accompaniments of any kind, but it is the proper thing to do. It removes fatigue, restores vigour, and takes off the rage of hunger without impairing the appetite. In China or Mongolia a traveller exhausted by a long stage, and suffering from heat or cold, should never think of sitting down to a meal, but should address himself to a teapot filled with hot tea. By drinking away at this he soon finds himself veering round into a comfortable frame of mind, and is enabled not only to wait patiently till his dinner is ready, but also to do ample justice to it when it comes, without danger of unpleasant consequences afterwards.

There is another element that goes to compose my recollections of Gobi. One morning, when we must have been in Gobi or near it, we found ourselves in a land that seemed enchanted. It abounded with boulders which, in size, shape, colour, and often in arrangement, so closely resembled human habitations, that we were sometimes puzzled to distinguish between stones and houses. Riding up to what seemed the abodes of men, we would find that we were in a solitude among rocks! At other places where it seemed as if we were alone, we would behold people moving about and disappear into what we had supposed to be grey boulders!

Another morning at early dawn we had a similar but more perfect deception. Ahead of us there appeared a tent with a flock of camels lying beside it. We congratulated each other on finding so convenient a place for our tea, and rode up to it cheerily, when,

to our amazement, we perceived as we neared it that what we had seen was neither tent nor camels, but a group of boulders, among which was one larger than the rest.

The weird feeling produced by climbing a high hill and finding it had only one side, and of riding among what seemed to be habitations and finding that they were rocks, and then coming upon what looked like rocks and finding that they were human habitations; the depression produced by riding over long stretches of country with nothing but a desolation of rough rocks surrounded with barren sand mixed with gravel; the lonely feeling of travelling through a land in parts destitute of inhabitants, and the pity that could not but be felt on discovering that most of the few and far between dwellers of that sparsely peopled region were at that particular time suffering from influenza; commiseration for man and beast living in a land where no rain had fallen, where no grass had grown, and where, consequently, many of the natives with their flocks and herds were travelling about in search of pasture and water; and the great fatigue of travelling that arose from the unnatural and scorching heat produced by the drought; the combination of all these feelings conspired to leave an unfavourable impression of Gobi, and it was with great joy that at length we found ourselves beyond the bounds of that afflicted country, and once more journeying over a land green with grass and herbs, where we could dismiss our camels and take again to horses.

South of Gobi the journey was uneventful. Rain had fallen, the plain was green, inhabitants were

plenty, and, for the most part, gave us a hearty welcome. The only adventure worth recording was at the close of the journey and at night. We were following along the road when, dark in front of us, rose a great black ridge. I asked my guide what that was. He replied it was a mountain. A nearer approach showed that it was the great wall of China. It was such a marked feature of the landscape that no one who had once seen it could forget it, and on questioning my Mongol I found that he had never been to Kalgan or to China before. Previously he had said that he had been to Kalgan and knew the way, now it appeared that he knew less about it than I did. We passed the wall at a gateway, and followed the road till we found ourselves on a lofty pass, and so surrounded with yawning precipices that came to the very edge of the road and went sheer down into the darkness that it was dangerous to go on without light. We lay down and waited for the dawn, when pursuing our way we descended into China along the dry bed of a mountain torrent, and found that somehow or other we had taken the wrong road, came over the wrong pass, and given ourselves some ten miles extra travelling.

We reached Kalgan in due course, and in such good time that my conductor was entitled to quite a little sum of money as reward for ending the journey before the stipulated date. After a few days' rest he went home with his well-earned money and his worn-out steeds. For days afterwards I indulged in copious draughts of tea, and ever since this pretty thorough lesson in riding have never had any difficulty in

performing, either with an attendant or alone, such journeys in the saddle as have been entailed upon me by the prosecution of my missionary duties.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT IN A MONGOL'S TENT.

A dust storm—Tents—Hospitality—Quarters for the night—A reading lama—Reading the gospel by fire-light—'Yes, I have spent a good night.'

WE had been travelling, uncertain both as to the time of day and the proper direction of our route. If we could have seen the sun, we should have known both the time and the points of the compass; but the air high up was loaded with very fine dust, which hid the sun and covered the earth with a dull twilight. At last the darkness began to thicken, and we knew night had come, and a short time afterwards we struck the great road, and my guide assured me we were not far from tents. Both our camels and ourselves were fairly tired out, and the hope of rest soon seemed pleasant; but on and on we went, and still no tents.

My guide, being mounted on a swift young camel, kept so far ahead of me that I could just distinguish a dark mass away before me. After following the road a long time, I urged my camel on, overtook the guide, and asked him where these tents were; he

simply pointed forward, and said, probably they were there. This was little comfort, but it was all that was to be had; his swift camel soon drew ahead again, and left my old animal far behind. Still no tent; still the distant black mass loomed in the darkness before, and I felt convinced that my guide knew little more about the tents than I did. Suddenly the black mass seemed to become broader. Was it the camel with his length across the road? Then it moved a little to the right. Had my guide spied tents? A very little urging now brought my camel alongside his swifter companion.

We had left the road, certainly, but where were the tents? Some distance off there was a streak slightly blacker than the rest of the darkness. The quick eye of the Mongol had noticed this. As we approached it, dogs began to bark, tent doors opened, and fires gleamed. We had found inhabitants at last. We were soon seated by the bright fire of a lama's tent. The lama was about twenty-seven years of age, and lived with his mother, an old woman over fifty, and another little lama, about fifteen. They were just at dinner, which seemed to consist of boiled millet, flavoured with a very acid kind of sour milk. The old woman urged the two lamas to finish their dinner quickly, that she might heat some tea for the two travellers. After snuff-bottles had been exchanged, and the customary questions asked and answered about the personal health and comfort of our host, and the peace and prosperity of his flocks; and he, on the other hand, had been informed who we were, where we were going, and how our cattle

stood the journey, my lama guide ventured to ask if there would be room for us to sleep in his tent.

Our lama host did not seem altogether pleased at the request, and answered, '*I am afraid not.*' His fear seemed quite natural. The tent was small, and pretty well filled up round the north part with boxes and the altar on which a butter-lamp was then burning. Most of the west side was taken up by a lamb-fold; and the east side, in addition to the usual quantity of pots, water-holders, milk-vessels, that cumber that part, had a thriving calf tied up, which for lack of something better to do, kept licking with evident relish everything it could reach. There seemed to be little enough room for three people to sleep; how, then, could other two find room?

My lama, nothing daunted, replied that I was not proud or troublesome, and could do with very little room; and it was finally settled that I should sleep where I was, and my guide should sleep in a neighbouring tent. This arranged, we drank our tea, the neighbours came in to see us, our host soon thawed, and he and I engaged in conversation, while my guide superintended the cooking of our dinner.

Our host proved more intelligent than lamas usually are, and could read Mongolian—a very extraordinary thing for a priest. When I produced my satchel of gospels, catechisms, and tracts, he handed me a book he had been reading just before dinner. It was not printed, but written in a small character, and much thumbed and worn. It was some old historical legend, and the lama pointed to the place where he had been reading, and asked me a word in it he could

not make out. He next asked me to read the whole passage, which I did.

It ran thus: 'The hero (I forget his name), stuffing the mouth of the hole with his white bonnet, took a large stone, and "toong, toong," beat the ground above. The fox alarmed, rushed out, and ran off with the white bonnet on his head.'

I had got thus far when a neighbour came in to let me see a Mongol prayer-book, used in presenting offerings to the god of the fire. I had to read a piece of this also, and then our dinner was ready.

While we ate, our host applied himself to the Gospel I had given him, and he could make it out very well indeed. He asked many questions about Christ and our religion, and this gave ample opportunity of explaining to him and to all in the tent the way of salvation through Christ.

After a good deal of interesting conversation on this subject, the time for sleep arrived. My guide went off to the other tent, and my host pointed out my place of rest between the lambs and the fire. I rolled myself in my sheep-skin blanket, and found that the place given me was just large enough; no more. I could see no place for the lama to sleep; and on asking him what he meant to do, he said he had to sit up and watch a cow that was expected to calve. The cold is so great, even in April, that a newly-born calf exposed all night is frozen to death. The lama settled himself on the south-east of the fire, took the Gospel in his one hand, and with his other hand from time to time kept throwing argols on the fire to keep up light enough to read with. Though very tired,

I could not sleep except for a few minutes at a time, and always when I woke up there was the lama reading slowly away at the Gospel, and always adding a few more argols to keep up the light. Happily, the book was printed from wooden blocks by a Chinaman in Peking. This made it less neat than movable type would have been, but at the same time made it much larger and rounder, and much better adapted for the bad eyes of the Mongols and the dim light of their tents. All night through this man kept reading, going out at intervals to see his cow; and when dawn began to come, and people from the other tents began to move about, he went off to sleep, and we got up and prepared to depart.

While the old woman was boiling tea for us, I read a chapter in Mongolian, and when I had finished this, and we were drinking our tea, the lama roused himself and asked why we called the Gospel 'the Joyful News.' The reason, I told him, was that all men are sinful. This he admitted at once. I then reminded him of how the Mongols sought to wipe away sin, and escape hell by penance, pilgrimages, fastings, offerings, and other difficult works. Now this book says that when a man wants to get rid of his sin, he has only to look to Christ, and his sin clears away; that when he wants to escape hell, he has only to come to Christ and Christ saves him by making him meet for heaven. Is not the book, then, rightly named 'the Joyful News'? He at once assented, got up, expressed many friendly wishes, escorted us beyond the range of the dogs, and made me promise that if I came back that way I would call

on him. As I left his friendly abode I could not help feeling that, notwithstanding the cold reception at first, the lambs on the one side, the fire on the other, and the sleeplessness, I had spoken the truth, when, in reply to the pleasant Mongolian salutation on waking, I replied, 'Yes, I *have* spent a good night.'

CHAPTER V.

DINING WITH A MONGOL.

The invitation—My host preparing himself for dinner—Conversation under difficulties—Arrival of a congenial companion—Dinner ready and served up—The piece of honour—The proper custom—The second course—Early hours—Why the rump is the piece of honour—Paying a Mongol in his own coin—A live dinner.

ONE afternoon towards evening, when sitting in my teacher's tent, a horse-herd appeared inside the door, and said that the mandarin desired my company to dinner. On asking when I should go, the reply was 'Now;' so I got up and accompanied the messenger back. I was ushered into the presence of my host, and found that the dinner was only a semi-official one, and as such was to take place in the second-best tent. The mandarin was preparing himself for the repast by drinking, out of small cups, Chinese whisky, which he heated by inserting the conical metal wineholder into the fire, or standing it in the boiling pot. How long he had been so em-

ployed, or how much whisky he had thus consumed, was doubtful, and he seemed so intent on imbibing more, that he did not care to talk much.

When he did speak it was only to ask formal questions which he had asked and heard me answer before, and when I attempted conversation, he, for the most part, simply stared at me in a blank manner, and, if he replied at all, uttered little more than monosyllables. Frequently when I spoke, he would look at me intently till I had finished, then, gulping down the whisky which he had meantime been holding in his mouth, he would utter an inarticulate grunt by way of assent, and busy himself heating or pouring out more whisky.

In the face of such a display of intelligence it was useless to prolong attempts at conversation, and I was about to follow the example of my host and relapse into silence, when his married daughter, a comfortable-looking, plump, broad-faced matron, who happened to be home on a visit, came to the rescue, and attempted to interest her father by showing my watch, and questioning me about our foreign marriage customs. But it was all in vain. The man seemed to have no capacity for or interest in anything but Chinese whisky.

Having invited me to dinner, I was a little surprised that he made no attempt to entertain me with conversation, and we were feeling a little awkward (by we I mean all the occupants of the tent except the host, who seemed quite happy as long as his whisky held out), when a neighbour, a poor old man blind of one eye, came in and seated himself between

the fire and the door, the humblest place in the tent.

The mandarin commanded a servant to supply the new-comer with a measure of warm whisky and a cup, when the poor old man's tongue was loosed at once, and, to our great relief, so was the mandarin's, and these two men, dissimilar in everything but their love of drink, had a long and lively talk together. There was no need to force a conversation between them, and for a long time they rattled away, speaking of horses, cattle, and the general affairs of the country-side. The children, both of the house and of the neighbouring tents, got out dice, and had a regular game, which I watched till dinner was almost ready. When that time arrived a Tibetan lama, who happened to have come that evening, was sent for. He came and shared the place of honour with me. This yellow-coated individual was to me what the poor tippler was to my host. He was intelligent and inclined to talk, and we did talk together, and I was feeling quite at home, till some food was brought in for the mandarin's inspection,—my lama's half-uttered sentence was left unfinished, his countenance became fixed, his gaze abstracted, his whole attention centred on what was in the great man's hands. I seemed to have faded altogether from the region of his consciousness, and our conversation came to an end.

But the silence did not last long, for soon the mutton was pronounced 'done,' and the serving lama who held the keys and acted in general as butler to the mandarin produced two great brass flat dishes. One of these he heaped up with meat for his

master. The other was filled with one huge piece of mutton, the hinder part of the backbone, including the great, broad, fat tail, several smaller portions such as ribs, etc. We set to work, the lama explaining that to present the rump and tail was the highest honour that a host could offer a guest at a feast.

Armed only with a knife, we soon made havoc of the steaming mass, when the mandarin remarked that evidently I was not aware of the proper custom. The lama explained that a portion should be given to all in the tent, which was now nearly full of neighbours and children who had collected for the occasion. At my request, he kindly undertook to perform the office of dissection and distribution for me. His knife knew all the joints and turns among the bones, and in a short time all in the tent were eating. While we were going on with this first course, millet was added to the water left in the pot in which the mutton had been boiled, and by the time that we had finished the tail and picked the bones the millet was ready, and was dealt out to all who could hold out a cup. As soon as the millet was finished, cushions were talked of, and I was politely invited to sleep where I was. The lama had gone a few minutes before, and I took the hint and departed, leaving the family going to bed at half-past six o'clock.

Setting the rump and attached tail before a guest is honouring him, because a sheep having but one tail, the presentation of this dish necessitates the slaying of a sheep, and it must also be a good one, for none but a fat one has a tail that is fit to be seen. It is rather awkward for a foreigner to feast

comfortably, having to attack, with no assistance but that of a knife, a great expanse of fat mutton spread on a brass dish nearly two feet in diameter; but I used to feel that I had quite repaid my Mongol hosts in their own coin when, in Peking, I invited them to take their place at my table and wield a foreign knife and fork.

The multitudinous dining appliances of civilization are as bewildering to a Mongol as their absence is embarrassing to a foreigner in a tent feast; and perhaps the guest in each case fares about the same, and feels that the feast ministers more to his dignity than to his appetite.

In the case of a lady a tent feast is not a success. On one occasion a Mongol who had been a guest at our table in Peking, wishing to feast my wife and myself at his own home, and yet not knowing how to make food that we could enjoy, solved the problem in a very sensible way. He sent us the sheep alive, apologizing for his ignorance of cookery, and requesting us to dress it in the way that we liked best.

CHAPTER VI.

APPEAL TO A MONGOL MANDARIN.

The use of a passport—Hiring horses—Stopped on the highway—A horse left on our hands—Asking advice of a local mandarin—The mandarin's settlement of the case—Another quarrel over a horse—A broken head—Fight in the tent—'He would leave his coat with me'—'Ne exeat regno'—Asking a mandarin's advice—His official utterance—His private opinion—Nothing private in Mongolia—Reconciliation—Tit for tat.

IN travelling in Mongolia it is necessary to be furnished with a passport, in order to be able to satisfy suspicious mandarins as to who and what the strange traveller may be, and, in case of trouble, to be able to claim the good offices and assistance of the local authorities. I never had my passport demanded by suspicious magnates, but I had, on two occasions, to ask advice from Mongol officials. The first case was as follows: Having intimated that I wanted to hire a horse for a journey, a Mongol came to my tent, bargained and settled as to the price, and arranged definitely to let me have it if, on inspection, I found it suitable. The horse was away on the plain, feeding, and was to be shown when the drove was brought home in the evening. When the drove came I deputed my Mongol servant to examine the animal, and he reported it as quite unfit for use. Hearing this I told my servant to bargain for some one else's horse. He soon returned to say he had

found another, and, supposing the matter all right, we retired for the night.

Early next morning the horse was brought, my servant mounted, and hearing him ride off I put my head out of my tent to see how he looked on his steed. It was a misty morning, and he was already some distance away, but I could see that he was pursued, and finally overtaken and stopped by a horseman, who, with a deal of shouting and noise, accompanied him back to my encampment. The cause of the trouble was soon explained. The hindering horseman was the owner of the horse first bargained for, who, eager for the hire, insisted on his horse being taken. It was explained to him that his horse was hired only on condition that, on inspection, it proved suitable, and that, being found to have a sore back, it had been rejected, and another hired in its place. A great amount of talking ensued, the upshot of which was, that the owner of the horse with the sore back sullenly and silently agreed that the other horse should be taken, and my servant accordingly departed.

The disappointed man remained at our encampment, and, seeing him look unhappy, I spoke to him in a friendly way. He seemed pleased enough at first, but suddenly changed his manner, said, 'You hired my horse; I have brought him; here he is; ride him or not ride him, you must pay for him; I leave him with you tied here,' and suiting the action to the word, he tied the horse to the wheel of one of my carts and went off.

The morning passed on, and there the horse re-

mained. What was to be done? 'Do nothing. Let him remain tied there. It is none of your business,' said my Mongol servant; but I could not well leave the beast tied up without food or drink simply because his master had a dispute with me. If, on the other hand, I let him loose, or if he took fright at anything, broke away, and went off, I should be held responsible, and have to replace him if lost. I was unwilling to run the risk of being involved in further complications with such a man as his owner had shown himself to be. To have quietly submitted and paid the hire would have been to make myself a proverb for incompetence, and would probably have rendered it extremely difficult for me afterwards to buy sheep, and hire men, oxen, horses, at anything like reasonable figures.

The best thing I could do seemed to be to ask the advice of the local mandarin, whose abode was visible about a mile away. He was one of the sons of a wealthy family, the head of which was of high rank, and, at that time, held an important office. Arrived at his '*city*,' as any cluster of tents belonging to two or three families is called in Mongolia, I found the dogs tied up to stakes driven into the ground, and was conducted into a small clean tent, spread with good cushions, but destitute of almost every other kind of furniture. This tent was evidently his office for the transaction of business. Tea was set before me, and I was desired to wait till the mandarin should appear.

As I approached the place I had noticed several men busy among a large drove of horses, and among them the owner of the horse about whose disposal I



MONGOL MANDARIN AND ATTENDANT.

had come to ask advice. When the mandarin appeared I recognized him as one of the group of men I had seen among the horses, and, after the ordinary forms of salutation had been gone through, I stated my difficulty, explained shortly how the troubles had arisen, and said that I had come to ask him what was the right thing for me to do in such circumstances. He was a young man, listened quietly to what I had to say, and, before he had time to speak, an elderly lama, probably his uncle, who had been diligently counting his beads, suddenly broke out into a storm against the owner of the horse, who was present among the crowd that filled the part of the tent about the door.

'What kind of a sinful creature are you that would saddle and ride a horse with a sore back; are you a human being or a dog?' The mandarin joined in the invective, and between them the poor fellow got such a rating that I had to intercede for him. On asking what I was to do with the horse, which the owner still declined to promise to remove from my encampment, the mandarin said, 'Turn it loose, and I'll be responsible for all consequences.'

After some general friendly conversation the mandarin suggested that as the owner of the horse was poor, and was doubtless disappointed at not receiving the hire he hoped his horse would earn, perhaps it would be as well for me to make him a small present to soothe his feelings. I asked him to name what sum he considered proper, but this he utterly declined to do, saying that the man had no claim to anything, but had behaved badly, and that if I gave anything

at all I gave more than he deserved. My business being now finished, I presented the mandarin with a small leather-bound note-book, was escorted a little distance beyond the 'city,' returned to my tent, handed a small present to the man who had caused all the trouble, and saw the steed led away.

My next appeal to a Mongol mandarin was made some years later, and was also connected with horse hiring. While encamped at the hamlet which was the home of my two Mongol servants, I had occasion to hire two horses, and somehow or other the natives laid their heads together to raise the price. I resented this by calling my servants into my tent, and saying that, however badly I might have been treated elsewhere, I had hoped for fair play at their native place. This was in the evening after all visitors had left.

Next morning, as I was just finishing my toilet, I noticed five or six people coming towards my tent; and as I had one visitor already, an old man sitting with his young child in his arms, I was much pleased to find the day beginning so well, and hoped I should have a good time with them conversing on Christian topics. Just as I sat down in my place, several of the men entered, and one of them, without waiting to seat himself, addressed a few words to the old man already in the tent, and almost simultaneously dealt him such a blow on his bare and closely-shaven scalp (he was a lama) that the stick with which the blow was given broke short off, and the old man's head swelled up visibly till there was a lump almost as large as a hen's egg. It was the work of a few moments, and was all over before any one had time to interfere. A

loud and angry altercation followed, which ended by the old lama slapping severely the face of his assailant, who was also a lama, but young. They flew at each other's throats, clutched the neck of each other's coats, and pushed and tugged violently; the spectators laid hold on the combatants and tried to pull them apart; the swaying and struggling mass of excited and shouting men reeled hither and thither in the narrow space of the tent, till a more violent lurch nearly carried away the pole, and narrowly missed bringing my abode down about their ears.

The noise and shouting attracted the other inhabitants of the hamlet, and by the time that we had separated the two wrathful and bleeding lamas the small population of the place had turned out in force, and the women of the community were running about talking, several of them simultaneously, and all of them with rapid utterance and in high-pitched tones. Excepting the first blow with the stick there was little damage done, the blood having come from some scratches of little consequence. The young lama was taken to my servants' tent, the women advised to stop talking and go home, and the old lama, placing again in his lap his young child, which he had disposed of in some way I had not noticed when the scuffle began, resumed his seat in my tent, and keeping all the while in his mouth a Chinese spherical brass button, which had been torn from his coat in the encounter, proceeded to call me to witness how that, while seated quietly in my tent with his child in his arms, he had been violently assaulted without offering any provocation.

After a little he rose to go, and a few minutes after there was an outcry among the tents of the community. It would seem that as soon as he reached his tent his senior wife (for though old and poor, the owner of only one tent, not only was he married, but actually had two wives), really alarmed, or feigning to be alarmed at his swollen head, bruised face, and disordered garments, raised a great storm, invaded the quarters of the young lama who had been the assailant, said her husband was disabled, and gave warning that should he die within the year the young lama would be held responsible for his life.

At her instigation the old lama reappeared in my tent, said he was a poor man and had been hurt, and that 'he would leave his coat with me.' Suiting the action to the word, he pulled off his outer garment, left it on my box, and went away. Soon after he sent me a message to say that I must find a new servant, as one of my men, brother to the young lama, could not be permitted to leave the neighbourhood. A still later intimation warned me that I myself must not leave the place till this quarrel had been settled. The assault had taken place in my tent, and I was an important witness in the case.

Now it happened that I wanted to make a journey on horseback with this very servant, who, according to the old lama, must not leave the place, and when the coat so ostentatiously deposited in my tent had lain some twenty-four hours unclaimed, I began to be curious as to what it all meant, and wished to know what truth was in the intimation that I was not at liberty to travel. So I made my way to the abode of

the mandarin. Happily he lived in the hamlet beside which I was encamped, and he had actually been in my tent when the assault took place, so that he was well acquainted with all that had happened. As to the coat, he advised me to return it by the hands of my servant, and ask what was meant by leaving it with me, and then the old lama would doubtless say what his intentions were. As to travelling, both I and my servant might go anywhere we liked till we were forbidden to do so by orders from the government office of the tribe; and, he added, as a day and a half had elapsed since information of the case had been forwarded to the governor, and no reply had yet arrived, it was not at all likely that either I or my servant would be troubled by a summons.

Having thus delivered his official opinion he proceeded in a friendly informal way to tell me his private opinion of the whole affair. It was this. The old lama being greedy had reviled my servant for trying to hire me horses cheaply. My servant's lama brother had heard of this, and coming to my tent to resent it had, in a moment of passion, broken the old lama's head, who, mounting his horse, had ridden over the plain to where the young lama's horse was pasturing, had carried it off, and placed it for safe keeping in the hands of a third party. He said the old lama was making much ado about nothing, as a Mongol's head was not likely to suffer much from such a knock as he had received, and that it was evident that he had not suffered much, as he had ridden about for a great part of the day on which the attack had been made.

In Mongolia all tents, even those of mandarins, seem open to everybody, so that anything that is said is soon known to all. The old lama had evidently heard what had been said. He took his coat, said that if the mandarin approved of my going I was at liberty to travel, but persisted that my servant must on no account leave the place. Nevertheless, when the time for departure came, we mounted and rode off slowly, to give opportunity to any one who should pursue us to overtake us easily; but no one hindered our going, and on our return we were glad to learn that the attempts at reconciliation, which had been made in vain before we started, had proved successful in our absence, and that the two lamas were once more good friends. The young lama had broken the old lama's head, the old lama had seized and ridden the young lama's horse, and though two wrongs don't make a right, on the young man making an apology, the old man had been content to cry quits; peace was once more restored to the little community. The vexation and expense of a tedious lawsuit were thus avoided.

Such is the sum of my experience in appealing to Mongol mandarins. I have kept as clear of them as I could, and I find that for the most part they are not anxious to interfere. They avoid interference as much as possible, and their attitude towards missions seems to be much the same as that of the Japanese official, who is reported to have privately advised missionaries in that country to go on with mission work as much as they liked, 'only don't bring yourselves and your work before our official notice.'

CHAPTER VII.

LAMA MIAO.

Situation—Meaning of name—Trading centre—Man being starved to death—The cage—Demeanour of the criminal—Tantalizing the sufferer—The '*Mirth of Hell*'—Jeering of the crowd—Death—Hardheartedness of the Chinese.

LAMA MIAO, as the Chinese call it, Dolon Nor, as the Mongols call it, is a great trading settlement in Mongolia, lying about a hundred and fifty English miles north-east of Kalgan. 'Lama Miao' means 'The Lama Temple,' and this name it owes to the fact of there being two large Lama temples about half a mile from it; 'Dolon Nor' means 'Seven Lakes,' and this name it owes to the abundance of little pools or lakes in its neighbourhood. It has a large population of Chinese traders, and is famous as a market for oxen, and especially famous for horses. But it is not my purpose in the present chapter to speak of the lakes, the temples, the large Chinese population, or the flourishing barter trade that characterize the place. The name of Lama Miao is always associated in my recollection with a spectacle that I have witnessed nowhere else, namely, that of a man being slowly and deliberately put to death by being starved in a cage.

Near one end of the main street, and forming one of the boundaries of an open space used as a market,

is a great wall forming the screen in front of the government office. As we passed with our caravan we noticed a crowd collected there, and after getting into an inn, on returning to the place we found that the object of interest to the spectators was a man, said to be a robber, who was fixed into a cage in such a way that only his head protruded. The frame fitted closely to his neck, and the cage being too low for him to stand up in, and too high for him to sit down in, he had to maintain a kind of half-crouching, half-kneeling posture, which must have been very painful. We learned that being condemned to death he was fixed in that cage, and was to remain there until death terminated his sufferings. He had not the look of a man who had been kept without nourishment, and had endured the torture of a cramped position for two days, and his demeanour was as far as possible removed from that which might have been expected of a man undergoing sufferings which he knew must, in a day or two, culminate in his death.

As we came near we found him keeping up a brisk and bantering conversation with the crowd of Chinamen, who, in the slack of business and the cool of the evening, had come out to have their walk and a look at the doomed man. We made our way through the crowd, and he noticed us, spoke to us, made faces at us, and passed jeering remarks about us as being foreigners. Prominent among the loungers was a burly Chinaman, who, as he kept pouring cash from his one hand to the other, pointed to the tea-shops and eating-houses near at hand, and seemed to confine his conversation with the starving man to remarks

about food and drink. The lively and careless appearance of the man, and the levity and mirth not only pervading the crowd, but which the caged man seemed to participate in as eagerly as any one of the bystanders, made it impossible to believe that the assembly gathered there was composed of men who had come to see a fellow being in the process of being starved to death before their eyes.

In China things are not what they profess to be, and the most reasonable conclusion to be drawn from the man's appearance and the tone of the crowd, was that though nominally being starved to death he was being fed. We were assured, however, to the contrary, and while amazed at the apathy of the crowd, could account for the boisterous conduct of the prisoner himself, only either by supposing that it was a striking instance of that hilarity of misery which some one has called the 'mirth of hell,' or by the more charitable supposition that the sufferings he had already endured had affected his brain, and that he was not responsible for his sayings and doings.

The following day I spent in my tent encamped at the Yellow or West Temple, and did not see the caged man myself; but as I returned with my camels in the evening I saw the cage being carried into the *yamen* amid the happy and jeering remarks of the crowd and my companion, who had seen him during the day, reported a great change for the worse in the man's appearance since the previous evening.

The fourth day of his torture terminated the wretched man's sufferings, somewhat to the surprise of the inhabitants, who, probably from previous ex-

perience, expected that this horrible exhibition would have afforded them a rendezvous in their leisure and relaxation for a day or two longer. The man died, the cage was no longer exposed, and doubtless the whole circumstance soon passed away from the minds of the Chinese who had stood round the doomed man smoking their pipes and jesting with and at the poor wretch. But truly the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

China boasts, and with great right too, of her civilization; but no particle of humanity can be claimed by that government, which, in exacting the forfeited life of a subject, condemns him to days of preliminary and entirely gratuitous agony, and, not content with simply starving him to death, exposes the famishing wretch in full view of the tea-shops, where he is tantalised by seeing thirsty men seated at tables leisurely drinking refreshing tea, and can smell the savoury viands with which hungry men satisfy their appetites. Government and people, too, are well matched. It was natural enough that Chinamen in such a place as Lama Miao should direct their walk in the leisure of an evening to such an exhibition as that in front of the *yamen*; and when it is remembered that the conducting of such a trade as that on which the Lama Miao depends, frequently necessitates the travelling of lone men with money through sparsely peopled regions, it is not to be wondered at that public indignation should burn strongly against such highway robbers as may fall into the hands of justice. Yet the amount of even dormant humanity must be but small in the breast of any man, whom even a justified

and strong indignation could render perfectly callous to such sufferings as were endured by the miserable prisoner in the cage.

In a promiscuous crowd it would not have been strange had there been a proportion of heartless men, who, destitute of all proper feeling, could see nothing in the punishment of sin but subjects for jesting; but the remarkable feature of that Lama Miao crowd was the apparently entire absence of any trace of commiseration or compassion in every one, young or old. While it was impossible to look without horror on the condition of the poor dying wretch whose sufferings rendered him delirious, it was impossible to look on the multitude around him showing symptoms of being dead to all compassion, and not pity the hardness of their hearts.

Much has been said by scholars in favour of Confucianism. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Here we have a government which for centuries has professed to follow and to teach to its people the doctrines of Confucius, and a people who as far as they are anything are Confucian; and yet the government in carrying out the extreme penalty of its law, divesting itself of dignity and compassion, deliberately revels in ingenious cruelty, and the people, seemingly dead to all humanity, stand by pleased and applauding. If this is the fruit of Confucian teaching, it is high time that China had something better, and it will be a happy day for China and her people when Confucianism pales before the rising light of Christianity, and the government, ashamed of past cruelties, when compelled to exact the penalty of a forfeited

life, shall be ingenious to mitigate the horrors of execution, and the people shall learn to have compassion and sympathy for misery, even in the case of those whose sufferings are the just punishment of their sins.

CHAPTER VIII.

WU T'AI SHAN.

The great sacred place of Mongol pilgrimage—Advantages secured by pilgrims — Surrounding scenery — 'The hamlet in the bosom of the mountains'—Temple on hill-top—Beauty of scenery—Temple above a gateway —Three hundred praying-wheels — Immense praying-wheel—P'u Sa T'ing—Pneumatic praying-wheel—'The ice that never melts'—Shrines on hill-tops—Hardships of Mongol pilgrims—Worn-out pilgrims escorted home —Expeditions of lamas from Wu T'ai to Mongolia—System of granting annuities.

AS Jerusalem to the Jews, as Mecca to the Mahometans, so is Wu T'ai Shan to the Mongols. All over Mongolia, and wherever Mongols are met with in North China, one is constantly reminded of this place. It is true that the mania which possesses the Mongols for making pilgrimages carries them to many other shrines, some of which are both celebrated and much frequented, but none of them can be compared to Wu T'ai. At all seasons of the year—in the dead of winter, in the heat of summer—pilgrims, priests, and laymen, male and female, old and young, rich and poor, solitary and in bands, on foot and

mounted, from places far and near, may be seen going to and returning from this, the most sacred spot on earth to the Mongol Buddhist, the object of his devout aspirations during life, the place where he desires his bones to be thrown at death. The Mongols speak of it as one of the blessed spots of the earth, holy, purified, everlasting, indestructible, and destined to survive the otherwise universal ruin that is to ensue at the close of the present stage of the world's existence. They say that any beast which eats the grass and drinks the water of the place is sure to be born hereafter into a higher state. One visit made to it by a pilgrim is said to ensure him happiness for the period of one of his future lives, two visits for two lives, three visits for three lives, and so on. In this way every devout Mongol endeavours to make at least one pilgrimage to this mountain during his lifetime, a number of them go frequently, and there are some who endeavour to visit it every year.

In addition to this promise of happiness after death, a journey to Wu T'ai is frequently prescribed as a cure for disease; and the merit of making these journeys is supposed to be transferable, so that it is no uncommon thing to meet Mongols going to Wu T'ai, not on their own account, but for the benefit of others.

This mountain is situated, not in Mongolia, but in China, in the province of Shansi, and having heard a great deal about it, I, in company with two other missionaries, set out to visit it. On the afternoon of the eleventh day after leaving Peking, we found ourselves going up a valley, which became narrower and narrower as we went on. Temples began to be

numerous, and just as the sun set we came upon an image cut out in the solid rock and painted with bright colours. On the same rock also were cut Tibetan characters, and from these and other signs we knew that we were coming near the famous Wu T'ai.

Darkness gradually settled down upon us, and the few people we met kept telling us that we were still a mile or two from the end of our journey. We would ask a man, 'How far?' he would say, 'A mile or two.' We would go on, and still the next man would say as before, 'A mile or two.' At last we saw, a little ahead, the lights of the small Chinese village where we were to put up—'The hamlet in the bosom of the mountains.'

Next morning we found that the name described the place very well. All round were hills, some of them so high that the morning light shone clear on their tops, while in the village below all was shade and gloom, and it was not till late in the forenoon that the sun was able to climb the east hill and look over the ridge down into the court of our inn.

Close to the village a hill rose steeply up, like a cone of loaf-sugar, and, seeing a temple on the top, we found it to be a shrine to which Chinese resort to pray for children. It seemed to be quite a famous temple, and was hung almost full of its own praises, written on red cloth and silk, the grateful offerings of votaries, who in this way returned thanks for having their prayers answered. In the temple we found only one priest, a Chinaman. He was old, deaf, could not read, and spoke a dialect so different from that of Peking that we could not talk much with him.

From the hill-top we counted about thirty temples. We could see almost no level land, but all up the hill-sides, nearly to the very summit, the Chinese had made terraces and sown them with oats.

The month was October, and the oats had been reaped, carried down, and piled up around the threshing-floors, where men were busy with flails threshing out the grain. There seemed scarcely enough level land to make threshing-floors, yet from the hill-sides good crops had been gathered, and there was abundance of food all along the valley.

While the brawling of the torrent rose mingled with the sound of the flail, it was a striking view to behold the encircling belt of mountains, the valleys with their streams, the forest on the south, the snow on the north, the temples flashing back the sunlight from their golden towers, the trains of camels winding slowly along, and the groups of worshipping pilgrims, sacred staff in hand, going the round of the temples.

One of the first temples we visited was a curious little upper chamber over the gate of the village. In the shrine, among the other images, was pointed out to us one, which, said the priests, had wonderful virtue. From a little mark on its brow could be drawn out a hair a thousand miles long, and from the body of the image a blaze of light shone out regularly three nights every month. So said the lamas. On the altars before the images were numerous little lamps trimmed and burning. The butter for the lights is supplied from the gifts of devout pilgrims. To give butter for the lamps is a common way of making an offering to the gods.

The priests lived in a little court below, and we had tea offered us in a very neat quiet room. The lamas of this temple were educated men, and we found them engaged in copying a large sacred book, in letters of gold, on blue cardboard. The Mongols believe that to write out a sacred book in black ink brings much merit, to write it in red ink brings more merit, but to write it in gold brings most merit.

Among the other temples which we visited was one with a large tope or mound. At the base of the tope were mounted more than three hundred praying-wheels, which the worshippers set in motion one after the other as they passed round. Inside a building of the same temple, we came upon an immense praying-wheel, about sixty feet high, containing shrines, images, books, and prayers. To the devout Mongol, such a wheel is a most useful invention. It is filled with books and prayers which would take him a life-time to read and repeat. Most likely he cannot read, or if he can read, he cannot find time to read so much, so he comes to the temple; two or three together go down to the cellar, lay hold on the hand-spokes, and with a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, round goes the wheel, and each one of them believes he gains just as much merit as if he had read the books, repeated the prayers, and knocked his head to all the gods that grin from the shelves and shrines of the wheel. No wonder that the Mongols travel hundreds of miles to reach so quick a method of making merit!

But the temple of all the temples at Wu T'ai is P'u Sa T'ing. It stands central among the others, and in

it lives the Zassak lama, who rules all other lamas. The P'u Sa T'ing is built along the ridge of a hill, and is reached by a very steep path, at the top of which rises a flight of over one hundred steps. We climbed up and entered. We found a street lined on both sides with houses built in the Tibetan style, and evidently crowded with lamas and pilgrims. The houses and the people did not look clean, and the street looked worse than either, being partly blocked up with piles of wood and argol, to be used as fuel. We were taken to the room of the attendant of the great lama, and a snug room it was, being clean, comfortable, and kept warm by a charcoal fire in a well-polished brass brasier. Near the ceiling, just above the charcoal fire, hung a paper cylinder, like an inverted wheel of life, which kept constantly turning. This also was a praying-wheel, and was kept in motion by the hot air ascending from the fire. In this way, whether the lama slept or ate, was at home or abroad, entertained his friends or attended to his superior, the wheel kept continually turning, and merit was always coming to his abode. Such was his idea.

We sent in a present of a new Testament and some tracts in Mongolian to the Zassak lama, and said we would call on him if he wished to see us. He sent back a polite message, asking for our welfare and comfort on the journey, begging us to accept a small present in return, and saying he was sorry he could not see us, as he was engaged in preparing for a great festival called the Ch'am Haren, or Sacred Dance.

Our last day at the T'ai I spent on the mountains. On one mountain—the central terrace—there is what

the Chinese call 'The ten thousand years' ice,' what the Mongols call 'The ice that never melts.' This ice is held in high esteem by the simple-minded pilgrims, and when at Wu T'ai some of them go up the hill and carry off a piece to work cures on their sick friends at home. The place was not difficult to find. It is at the foot of a precipice high up on the north side of a steep hill. A spring issues from the rock, the water freezes up in winter, and part of the ice, untouched by the sun's rays, lasts all the summer through. It is quite easy to see why the ice does not melt: but the Mongols are taught that it is a miracle, and also believe that the ice can work miracles. One lama assured us that the ice was a cure for all disorders and a preserver of general health. If what he said had been true, I could not have been in danger of any sickness for some time to come, because my lunch for that day consisted of Chinese biscuit and a lump of the ice that never melts.

Leaving the ice I climbed the north terrace, perhaps the highest of the five hills. The crest of the hill was speckled with snow, and the view from the top was grand. On every side, as far as the eye could reach, was one vast sea of mighty mountains, some of which, it is said, rise ten thousand feet above the level of the sea. Only one thing was out of keeping—the temples in the valley below, and the gods in the shrines on the hill-tops. Wherever there is a pretty spot in China or Mongolia, there the Buddhists build their temples and bow themselves to their idols. The shrines on the hill-tops were very rude affairs, enclosures formed by rough stone walls, and containing

ragamuffin gods—stocks of weather-beaten wood, blocks of battered stone, and lumps of rusty old iron. The carved wooden gods were so much the worse for the weather, that their features, if they ever had any, were altogether defaced. One, not made of a single piece, like the rest, but built together by joiner work, had fared worse than its more humble neighbours. His arms were gone, and his breast, heart, and stomach had all fallen out. Strange to say, his head remained; and it was laughable to see such a hollow mockery stare at you with a solemn face. The stone images were sadly battered by tumbling about among the rubbish, and the cast-metal gods mostly had their heads broken off and set carefully on again, to stand there till the next storm would send them rolling. Thus God is not only robbed in the valley, but men climb up as near to heaven as they can, and insult Him to His face. They put up their wretched images and say, 'These are the gods of the hills.' It is to these and such-like gods that the Mongols come from far to pay their vows and offer their donations; and all along the road, going and returning, the Mongols asked us if we were going to Wu T'ai to worship; the Chinese, if we went to burn incense. This always gave us an opportunity to tell them about the true God and the true worship. By selling books and distributing them, by preaching and conversation at the T'ai, and on the way, we sought to teach Mongols and Chinese to know and love the God who is not to be represented by images, and who is to be worshipped neither on Mount Wu T'ai, nor in Peking, but in spirit and in truth.

We returned by a route different from that by which we went, but along both roads we found evidences of Mongol pilgrimage in Mongol notices printed on the front of the inn, saying that—'The men of this inn are honest and mild, everything is ready and cheap, therefore, O ye Mongols, our brothers, you could not do better than rest here.' We put up at one of these inns, and the men may have been honest and mild, but certainly things were neither ready nor cheap; we had to wait a long time for a poor dinner, and pay a long bill for it when it came.

Though the Mongols seem to take naturally to pilgrimages, and travel long distances in their own country without much inconvenience, the travelling through the Chinese territory that separates Wu T'ai from Mongolia is a great hardship to them. In Mongolia they feed their cattle on the plain and pay nothing for lodging; in China they have to pay for lodging, cooking, fodder, and, in many cases, even for the watering of their animals. In some cases a large company of pilgrims travel with carts and cattle along the plain till they reach the point nearest to Wu T'ai. Arrived there, they leave their carts and most of their cattle in the keeping of Mongols, and thus, in light marching order, as it were, make the best of their way to Wu T'ai, avoiding in this way the heavy demands that would be made upon their slender stock of money if accompanied by many beasts of burden. On returning once more to Mongolia, they heave a sigh of relief, pay a small fee for the keeping of their cattle, and journey homeward joyously through their

own inexpensive country. There is no more severe test of the earnestness of the religious devotion of the Mongols than their being willing thus to journey for days through the country of unsympathetic Chinamen, whose language they do not understand, and who lie in wait for their money, ready to fleece them at every turn, charging them even for the water that their horses drink, which, though fair and just according to Chinese custom, the Mongols regard as the height of extortion.

The lamas of Wu T'ai seize every opportunity of strengthening and extending their connection with the Mongols of the plain. Sometimes a party of pilgrims reach Wu T'ai on foot, but are so worn out by the journey that they feel unable to return home. The temple they lodge at sends them home under the care of one or two of its lamas, who receive gifts for their temple, not only from the families of the pilgrims they have thus assisted, but also from the devout inhabitants of the neighbouring country, to whom the assisted pilgrims introduce them as their benefactors. In many cases the succouring of a company of distressed pilgrims proves a paying speculation.

Not content with this, the temples at Wu T'ai are in the habit of fitting out annual collecting expeditions, which, consisting of several lamas, start in spring, travel about with carts and tents in summer, and return before winter, carrying with them sometimes large sums of money, and driving before them flocks and herds, the offerings of the faithful. These expeditions are numerous and indefatigable, and perhaps there is no tent, rich or poor, throughout the

whole length and breadth of the eastern half of Mongolia, which is not visited by such deputations every year. These collectors penetrate even beyond the bounds of the Chinese empire, and carry off rich offerings from the Buriats, who, compared with Mongols, are wealthy. Food, tea, skins, cattle, money, all are eagerly received, and one of the considerations that induce men to make these offerings is, that the names of donors are entered on the subscription list; they thus become in some sense patrons of the temple, and they are pleased to think that they have connections with Wu T'ai, and that the next time they visit that sacred place, they will not be going among strangers, but will be received as old acquaintances by those who experienced their hospitality in the desert, and were the recipients of their pious gifts.

The lamas of Wu T'ai also seek to increase their influence by a practice which resembles the granting of annuities. When a Mongol has been rich in his younger days, but in his old age is somewhat reduced in circumstances, and has no son on whom he can devolve the management of his affairs, he sometimes seeks to escape from the losing battle of life by transferring all his property to some temple at Wu T'ai, on condition that the temple will feed, lodge, and clothe him and his for the term of their natural lives. This arrangement has a great fascination for some; it relieves them from anxiety about their temporal affairs, frees them from the necessity of labour in their declining years, and permits them to devote the close of their life, without distraction, to the duties of religion. It is not uncommon for Mongols, suffering

from some disease that is considered mortal, to leave their homes, and await death in the temple belonging to their native place; but happy above all others is he considered, who, before sickness has laid its hand upon him, can leave the turmoil of the world, and withdraw himself to the longed-for sanctity and peace which he hopes to find in the holy temples among the sacred valleys of the blessed Wu T'ai Shan.

Knowing the intense worldliness, the unblushing wickedness, the thievish dishonesty, and the envy and strife that characterize, with but few exceptions, almost the whole tribe of lamas, one cannot but pity decent, quiet old men, who, for the peace of their souls, retire to such dens of iniquity. But they do it with their eyes open, after life-long experience of lamas and temples, with all their faults and wickednesses; and, to tell the truth, the abominations do not seem to disturb them.

Mongol Buddhism and holiness have long ago parted company, and it seems possible for men and women living among and partaking in scenes of unblushing evil, to be at the same time experiencing in their souls the effectual consolations of their religion. This seems at first sight almost incredible, but I am convinced it is true; and perhaps no more serious charge could be brought against any religion than this, which holds true of Buddhism, that notwithstanding many excellent doctrines that characterize it as a theory, its practical effect is to delude its votaries as to moral guilt, to sear their consciences as with a hot iron, to call the wicked righteous, and send men down to the grave with a lie in their right hand.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOSPEL IN MONGOLIA.

Halt at tents—Scripture pictures—Books—Utility of tracts as compared with Gospels—Difficulty experienced by a heathen in understanding Scripture—Bibles and tracts should be sold together—Mongols despise our Scriptures as small in extent—Buddhism not to be successfully attacked through its deficient astronomy and geography—The hope for Christianity among the Mongols.

WHEN a missionary travelling in Mongolia reaches a cluster of tents, a halt is called, the tents are set up, the goods unloaded, a fire of the quick argol is started, and soon master and men abandon themselves to tea-drinking. Meantime natives of the place have gathered round. Sometimes they are very friendly and assist in setting up the tents, sometimes they stand by counting their beads and looking on, but almost always they are ready and willing to join in the tea-drinking. Some of them are attracted by the medicine, which they have heard by report going before is dispensed gratis, some are drawn merely by idle curiosity, some few come in the hope of getting a Mongol book. For the most part they are a little distant at first. Tea even fails to thaw completely their reserve, and it is not till a case of Scripture pictures, gaudy with colours, is produced, that old and young find their tongues, and crowd around, all eye and ear. A selection of

the pictures gives a good opportunity for stating the main doctrines of Christianity; and in the case of the picture, the eye assisting the ear, even people of small intellectual ability often apprehend clearly the teaching, and remember it distinctly.

The pictures exhausted, then come the books. These comprise three or four tracts, some of which have illustrations, a catechism, and the Gospel by Matthew. The tracts, being written in an easy style and free from proper names, present no difficulty to a moderately good scholar; the catechism does not run so smoothly; but when he comes to the Gospel, any but a very exceptionally good reader stumbles badly, and frequently lays down the book, saying it is too much for him. Indeed, long experience of many different Mongol scholars attempting to read the Gospel in the tent, leads to the belief that the portions of Matthew's Gospel of which an unassisted Mongol can make sense at all are comparatively few. In justice to the translators it is only fair to state that the fault does not seem to lie with the translation. The difficulty seems to arise from the want of acquaintance, on the part of the reader, with Gospel truths and doctrines, from a slight indefiniteness inherent to Mongol writing, and, perhaps mainly, from proper names, Old Testament references, and Jewish customs occurring or referred to in this Gospel.

From the combination of all these causes it happens that a Mongol, although a good scholar, seldom, even after a good deal of trying, succeeds in extracting much meaning from Matthew's Gospel, and one is forced, rather unwillingly it must be con-

fessed, to the opinion, that in propagating Christianity among the heathen, tracts and other books of elementary Christian teaching are, in the initial stages at least, a necessary introduction to the Bible itself. Of course, after a man has been taught somewhat of the doctrines and facts of Christianity, the most useful book that can be put into his hands is the Bible, but it seems very doubtful, if, in many cases, much good is accomplished by placing the Bible in the hands of a heathen as a first step towards his enlightenment. This refers first and mainly to Mongolia; and if tracts and treatises are understood more easily than the Bible in Mongolia, may not the same thing hold true in China? Granting that the Chinese language is free from the indefiniteness inherent to the Mongol, do not heathen Chinese in reading the New Testament stumble at proper names, references to the Old Testament prophets, and allusions to Jewish manners and customs? In selling Bibles in China, for the most part, the reader takes his purchase and disappears, and the colporteur or missionary hopes the best from the transaction; but if, as in Mongolia, the missionary or colporteur had the opportunity of sitting with the purchaser for half an hour or a whole hour, and helping him to read his book, it is just possible that by-and-by the earnest Christian evangelist would hope more for the spiritual enlightenment of the man who bought a 'Peep of Day,' for example, than of the man who bought a Gospel or even a New Testament. The great Bible Societies sell their Bibles far and wide over China. They do well. But it is scarcely possible to escape the conviction that they would do

much better if they allowed their colporteurs to sell tracts along with the Bibles. If the nature and constitution of the Bible Societies make this impossible, could not it be arranged that a Bible man and a tract man should go together? It is known and admitted that there are instances of men converted from heathenism to Christianity, men who never met a Christian, and who never handled a Christian book except the Bible; but these men are very rare, and in the general circulation of the Bible it would very much increase the number of those who get to understand the Sacred Word if it were accompanied by treatises and explanatory tracts.

After a Mongol has received some idea of Christianity, he for the most part expresses himself entirely satisfied. He says it is good. It is like his own religion. It is the same. And he says this, though what he has read, or what he has had told him, includes prominent and pointed statements of Christian doctrines diametrically opposed to the fundamental beliefs of his own Buddhism. It is then necessary to go back with him and point out the differences; and if he at last understands that a man cannot be a good Buddhist and a good Christian at the same time, his next thought is that it is quite superfluous to bring any other or any new religion to him who is supplied with what he regards as such an excellent one already.

When a Mongol understands that Christianity is intended to supersede Buddhism, his first thought seems to be a tendency to despise the smallness of our Scriptures as compared with his own. Their

Scriptures form a library of large volumes which it takes a good string of camels to carry. The idea of such Scriptures being superseded by a small book which a child can carry in one hand! When, too, it comes to a comparison of the doctrines contained in the two Scriptures, the Buddhist can, if he is well up, produce no mean list of excellent doctrines; and when it comes to miracles, the Buddhist thinks that those he can quote are not a whit behind those of our Scriptures. It is true that there is a vast difference in the tone of the teaching, and the spirit, aim, and circumstances of the miracles of the two Scriptures. It is also true that a Christian man, of fair intelligence, can see the difference of aim and bent and tone of the inspired writing and the Buddhistic compositions, as plainly and readily as an ordinary man of common intelligence can tell a wall raised by the hands of a competent builder from the attempted imitation of a bungling amateur. This is all true. And in the case of a man educated in Christianity and intelligent as to Buddhism, this palpable difference would carry overwhelming weight with it in favour of Christianity. But blindly and enthusiastically bigoted for Buddhism as they are, the Mongols are hardly in a position to feel the force of arguments drawn from this source.

It might be thought that the erroneous astronomy and geography mixed up in, and forming an integral part of the Buddhistic Scriptures would lay these Scriptures open to successful attack. But the truth seems to be that a devout Buddhist is no more disturbed as to the reliability of his Scriptures, when

their false geography and astronomy are attacked, than a devout Christian is alarmed for the stability of his Bible when he hears a geologist lecturing on the first chapters of Genesis.

Superadded to these intellectual difficulties, which are met with in attempting to propagate Christianity in Mongolia, is another difficulty, grosser in its nature, and only less powerful in its operation than those mentioned above. This is the almost all-powerful sway that Buddhism has over its Mongol votaries, and the intensity of the bigoted enthusiasm with which the Mongols cling to their religion. Considerable acquaintance with Mongolia, with Mongols, and with Mongolian habits and arrangements of life, lead to the conviction that any one Mongol coming out of Buddhism and entering Christianity would lead a very precarious existence on the plain, if in fact he could exist there at all. It is perfectly true that were a Mongol really impressed with the truth of Christianity he, like many other martyrs, would not confer with flesh and blood; but still the hardship that would follow a confession of Christianity must not be forgotten in stating the difficulties that lie in the way of Mongols becoming Christians.

But there is one point where the superiority of Christianity can be made manifest to the Mongols, that is, by its fruits. Buddhism is an elaborate and in many respects a grand system, but in one thing it fails signally, that is, in producing holiness. A Mongol when attacked on this point, for the most part, does not make much of a defence. He knows and admits that his religion does not purify the

heart and produce the fruits of holy living; on the contrary, the commercial view taken of the relation of sin and merit militates against morality, and if he be not one of the ignorant devout, but a man of good information, he will admit that the temples are often little more than cages of unclean birds. Here, then, is the hope of Christianity. If it can be made manifest to the Mongols that Jesus can cleanse a man's heart and reform his conduct, can make the vile man pure and the thief honest, that would be an argument which they would find it difficult to answer. Their own lamas make plenty of fuss and mystery over their medical system, but there are things that with all their fuss and mystery they cannot cure. And when a little foreign medicine is applied and a cure follows, no carefully reasoned-out argument, no erudite chemical lecture is required to convince them of the efficacy of the remedy. In the same way it is to be hoped that a closer acquaintance with the effects of Christianity will, when they see its purifying power, convince the Mongols of its superiority, in a way that arguments and discussions on its internal, external, and historical evidences never could do. In this seems to lie the only hope for the success of Christianity in Mongolia.

CHAPTER X.

MONGOLS' DIFFICULTIES ABOUT CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity regarded as superfluous—The grandeur of Buddhism—If Christianity is true, Buddhism is false—The various forms of Christianity—Paucity of Christian Scriptures—No liturgy in our Bible—The Trinity—Resurrection—Suffering—How do we know our Bible to be true?—Mongols as a rule admit that they are sinners—Counting beads—Buddhism says a man can save himself—Thinks Christianity too easy—Finds Christianity too difficult—Answers to prayer—Some of the objections are earnest, some are frivolous—Answer to many objections—Material difficulties in the way of Mongols willing to accept Christianity.

THE first and one of the greatest difficulties that a Mongol feels about Christianity is, that it seems to him to be superfluous. He has his Buddhism, and what else does he want? In what is it defective that he should want another religion? It seems to satisfy all the wants of his soul, and his reverence for it is unbounded. Buddhism as referred to here is not that religion pure and simple in the abstract, but the version of it now extant in Mongolia, which seems, in some things, to have adapted itself to meet human wants more fully than is possible if the rigid letter of the theory be adhered to.

Buddhism, as the Mongol knows it, is a magnificent system in its abstract doctrines, in the size of its

Scriptures, in the grandeur and number of its temples, in the imposing nature of its ceremonials, in the antiquity of its history, in the extent of its empire in the world, in the number and reputed power of its living Buddhas, and in the prominent part it plays in his native country. It strikes his senses with an overwhelming power; almost no one disbelieves its creed, almost no one is remiss in the practice of the duties it enjoins. Christianity is, in his opinion, quite superfluous.

But to any one who gets over this preliminary difficulty, and listens to the doctrines of Christianity, there soon arises a much more serious consideration, namely, If Christianity is true, Buddhism is false! This staggers him. Buddhism false! with its cart-loads of Scriptures, with its hosts of miracles in the olden times, with its hosts of miracles in the present times, and its crowds of constantly reincarnating living Buddhas! False! Is it possible, he asks, that a religion *can* be false which has lived so long, spread so far, flourished so greatly, and struck its roots so deeply into human nature, that millions live in it enthusiastically and die in it happily? Can falsehood be so prosperous? Can falsehood be so powerful?

If too, he says, of all the religions, Christianity alone is true, how is it that it has been so long in coming to us? It has been established eighteen hundred years, and we are only now for the first time hearing of it! If it alone is true, and if its doctrines are so important, how comes it that we have been left in ignorance of it so long? Would it not have spread

itself more rapidly, and, in virtue of its being true, have long ago conquered every other false system?

Then again, when a Mongol is pressed to accept Christianity, he professes himself bewildered by the various forms of it with which he comes into contact. Of old he has known the Russian Christianity of the Greek Church. Most probably he has heard or seen something of the Roman Catholic religion, which has large colonies of Chinese adherents inhabiting localities either in, or bordering on, Mongolia, and now he is presented with a third form of Christianity. The Russian says his is the best form, the Roman Catholic advances as stout a claim for his system, and the Protestant not only makes a similar claim, but offers to prove that his is the best of the three.

In addition to Christianity, the Mongols come into contact with Mohammedanism, in the persons of many Chinese traders, who, of course, stand up for their particular religion; and thus, among 'Black Lamas' (as the Russian clergy are called in Mongolia), Romish priests, Protestant missionaries, and 'White Hats' (Mohammedans), the Mongol pretends that his head is turned, and he knows not whom to believe. It is fair to add that this last difficulty is not a common one, but is urged only by the few men of inquiring minds who have put themselves in the way of learning something of these four systems.

A difficulty that seems to be *generally* felt is the paucity of the Christian Scriptures as compared with the voluminous Buddhistic writings. Very few, even among the learned Mongols, have I found able to tell exactly to how many volumes their sacred books

extend. The explanation perhaps is, that in different places and editions they are put up differently; but the Ganjore, one of their sacred collections, is usually stated to contain a little over a hundred volumes, and the Danjore, represented to be a kind of commentary on the former, a little over two hundred volumes.

Visitors to Buddhist temples usually have these collections pointed out to them, standing ranged up frequently one on each side of the great service hall. The volumes are about two feet long, seven or eight inches broad, and four or five inches deep, and carefully swathed up in their yellow wrappings. They present a most imposing appearance, and when a rich man or a community has occasion to borrow them, a string of camels or a small train of carts is necessary for their transport. Remembering this, it is not difficult to understand the amazement of the Mongol when he hears that the Christian Scriptures are contained and complete in the one moderately sized volume which the missionary lifts from his side, and hands across the tent to the visitor for inspection.

By nothing is the Mongol more surprised than to find that our Bible and our religious system has no set form of liturgy to be got off by heart and repeated, as in his services and prayers. His idea of Scriptures seems to be something to be learned off and repeated by rote, and he is much astonished to find that we have nothing resembling even in a distant way his 'Nom,' except the Lord's Prayer.

The idea of the Trinity is apt at first to prove a difficulty, and many questions are asked about the various persons, and their relations to each other, and

how Father and Son can be of the same age. Some part of the difficulty is removed by explaining that human nomenclature can only inadequately represent Divinity; and in his own religion he is accustomed to find things hard to understand; and thus, when he meets with anything in Christianity which he cannot fathom, a Mongol can lay it aside with the remark that the 'doctrine is deep.'

A question frequently asked is, 'How about those who lived and died before the coming of Jesus? If it is only Jesus who can save men, are all those lost who died before Jesus came?'

Vicarious suffering, too, seems strange to them, their own system teaching that for his sin a man must suffer, and there is no escape; but when explained to them, this doctrine presents no difficulty.

The Christian doctrine of a future state involves an utter denial of the Buddhist theory of transmigration, which is interwoven with almost every other doctrine of that religion, and is perhaps the tenet of all his theological system which is most firmly believed by a Mongol, and which seems ever most vividly present to his mind. To deny this doctrine dissipates at once any idea that the two religions may be one and the same, and gives rise to a whole host of difficulties.

If souls do not transmigrate, where do they come from at birth, whither do they go at death? If they did not exist before this life, does their existence cease at death? The idea of an eternal heaven seems to be easily enough received; but a Buddhist, though familiar, through his own religion, with inconceivably long periods of punishment for sin

seems to stagger at the idea of a hell, to the duration of which no period is assigned, and from the sufferings of which no efforts of the sinner or his surviving friends avail to open a way of escape.

Admitting, for argument's sake, the Christian doctrine that we can recognize and expect to meet such of our friends as go to heaven, he asks, How about those whom we do not meet there, and who are gone to the place of torment? Knowing that they are suffering, can we be happy? And how does God regard them and their sufferings? Can He see them and be happy? And if God knows everything, and knows before He has created them, that such and such men will be sinners and not be saved, but go to hell, why, knowing all this, does He, who is goodness and love, make such men at all? And why did God, who made the world and rules it, and knows all and can do all—why did not He prevent the serpent from deceiving our first parents, and keep sin from entering the world at all?

Then again, asks the Mongol, How can a man's body live again? It is taken out to the plain, and thrown down on the ground; the dogs, wolves, and birds devour it, and where is it, or how can it be again gathered together?

But this is not all. How, he asks, if souls do not transmigrate, is the presence of suffering animals in the world to be accounted for? That dog, starving, diseased, miserable, enduring, in short, a living death, what about it? If souls do not transmigrate, and if this suffering now be not the punishment of sin committed in a former life, what then is it?

A Mongol sometimes asks how we know all that our Bible tells us of a future state to be true? Has any one among us died, gone to the world to come, seen these things, and come back to life to report on them? Not only does he ask this question, but seeks to establish the truth of his own tenets, by affirming that the doctrines of Buddhism have been corroborated by the testimony of men who have risen from the dead.

Some difficulty, too, is occasionally made on the doctrine that all are sinners, by men who maintain that in Mongolia there are individuals, admittedly very few, who are not sinners. The speakers do not, openly at least, claim this saintship for themselves, but usually for some other man known or reported to exist, whose place of abode, when minutely asked for, is commonly stated in a very indefinite sort of way, as for example, 'north-west,' and at a very great distance, and whose existence is evidently, even in the mind of him who brings up the case, theoretical.

As a rule, Mongols do not need to have the doctrine that men are sinners pressed upon them. That they admit. They also admit the necessity for cancelling guilt. It is the peculiar method of cancelling it advanced by Christianity that they hesitate to receive, and one of the greatest objections they have to this method is, that, in their opinion, a sufficient value is not attached to good works in wiping away sin. Buddhism does not fail to inculcate good works and virtuous actions, and, as an incentive to the performance of them, teaches a doctrine of sin and forgiveness, which, stated in simple language, amounts

to this—that at death all a man's good actions are balanced against his bad actions, and if his good actions preponderate he is entitled to reward, and if his bad actions preponderate he has to suffer punishment. A man who has been thus taught to think and act does not like to be told that all his good works and virtuous actions are no more than his simple duty, and that no amount of such works and actions can wipe away sin.

Then again, Buddhism puts into his hand a rosary, and tells him that each prayer repeated has a certain value in cleansing away sin, and sends him on long pilgrimages to famous temples, assuring him that all such journeys are added as large items to the account of merit by which he hopes after death to do away with the accumulated sins of his life. Christianity tells him that counting beads and making pilgrimages can do nothing towards taking away his sin, and he is greatly shocked to find that if he admits Christianity as true, he must be content to learn that he has wasted a great accumulation of attention and persevering energy on what is useless; but when he is told that he can do absolutely nothing to wipe away his sin, he is more shocked still; and many a man who might be content to let the labour he has spent on his beads and pilgrimages go for nothing, if some other better way of making merit were shown him, is not only staggered but entirely offended, when he has pressed upon him the doctrine of human helplessness.

It frequently appears to a Mongol that salvation, according to Christianity, is altogether too easy. He

is surprised to find that a Christian, a teacher of Christianity even, may kill vermin, eat flesh, nay, even marry a wife, without infringing any of the doctrines of his religion. His surprise is much increased when he learns that Christianity is free from the almost endless prohibitions, restrictions, vows, and rites with which Buddhism abounds; and when the freedom of Christianity dawns upon him he sometimes expresses himself in terms which are an unconscious echo of the words of Christ, 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'

A little more knowledge, however, is sufficient to change his opinion. When he learns that salvation, according to the Christian idea, is not merely the cancelling of a long score of old sins, and of the current sins of the present, but purification from sin itself, and the renewal of the heart, he thinks the aim an impossibility, and regards the purification as a process which he is not willing to be put through. To enter upon a contest with evil, and strive to eradicate it from the heart—this is a task from which he shrinks. He is discouraged by the thought on the one hand, that as far as he succeeds, he can claim no merit; and on the other hand, by supposing that he has to maintain the unequal strife in his own strength—an error into which it is quite natural for him to fall, seeing that in working out his own salvation, according to the Buddhistic method, he is not accustomed to rely on any power higher than his own.

One great difficulty in explaining Christianity to a Mongol is, that all his life, having looked upon salvation as a thing to be accomplished by him, he is very

slow to take up the idea that it is something that has been done *for* him, and is to be done *in* him, by an omnipotent Saviour, and that the part he himself has to play in the process is the very subordinate one of yielding a willing submission to the power of God which operates upon him, and of humbly following the footsteps of One who treads the path before him, shelters him in all dangers, supplies all needed strength, and guarantees that every true-hearted follower shall, in good time, arrive at the desired goal of that heavenly joy which springs from the consciousness of forgiveness, and the felt freedom of purity from sin.

Answer to prayer is now and then brought up as a difficulty by men who profess to think that a man might pursue a premeditated course of deliberate sinning, and by means of prayer obtain forgiveness, and so go on in iniquity with impunity—a difficulty to be traced directly to the demoralisation produced by the theory of a man's future state depending simply on the preponderance of his good or bad actions.

Sometimes a man wants to know how far satisfactory would be the state of one who, disregarding Christ, confined his worship to reverencing a supreme God in an indefinite sort of way; and nearly every man who converses much about Christianity wishes to know what has become of all the heathen who have died without hearing of Christ.

Did Buddha live at all? it is sometimes asked, and if the Buddhist writings are not received as true, how can the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures be established?

Such are the intellectual and spiritual difficulties raised in the minds of Mongols by the doctrines of Christianity. Of these some are brought forward by men who seem to be earnest enough, and who may perhaps be really in perplexity; but it is to be feared that the greater part of them are advanced merely for the sake of argument, and are welcomed rather as subjects of debate than felt to be barriers to the acceptance of Christianity.

Many of these questions admit of answers and explanations which seem to recommend themselves as satisfactory to the Mongol mind, and as to subjects not treated of in the Bible, and doctrines difficult to fathom, perhaps the most successful method of dealing with an objector is to explain that the Bible does not claim to be a complete set of treatises explaining everything, but a guide book pointing out clearly the way to heaven, informing the traveller of everything which it is needful or helpful to him to know, but leaving a multitude of things to be seen and learned by him when he arrives at his destination. Many Mongols go to Peking, and every one can understand that a handbook for the road might be perfect, although of thousands of things in the capital it made no mention at all, and only made vague allusions to others.

There is another set of difficulties which meantime form the real barrier to the acceptance of Christianity, and these are material. For a Mongol to profess Christianity would be to face ruin. It is very doubtful if a consistent native Christian could subsist on the plain among his Buddhist countrymen. So great

is the power of the lamas, and so intense seems to be the spirit of bigotry that pervades the whole community, that any one who refused to conform to the requirements of Buddhism would perhaps find it impossible to remain in his native country; and men who knew something of Christianity, when pressed to accept it, have offered to do so if the missionary would undertake to support them, adopting and protecting them as part of his own establishment. Parents, too, offer their children on the same condition, namely, that the missionary feeds and clothes them for the present, and makes himself responsible for their future career.

A man thoroughly convinced of the truth of Christianity, and powerfully moved by the Holy Spirit, would not be deterred by considerations of hardship from professing Christ, and a simultaneous profession by even a small number would lessen the difficulty immensely. There are not wanting in Mongolia men who, not endowed with any official authority, but possessing great natural force of character, exert a powerful influence on the communities in which they live. Should such a man be among the first to declare for Christ, he might greatly lessen the difficulty in the way of others. But it is useless thus to speculate. If only the truth can be made to reach their understanding, it is not to be doubted that God will in His own time and way, even among the Mongols, and notwithstanding all difficulties, apply it with living power to the hearts of men, and call out from among them those who will confess Him before their countrymen, and smooth the way for those who afterwards shall follow their example.

CHAPTER XI.

MONGOLIAN BUDDHISM.

Buddhism as it exists now in Mongolia—Power of Buddhism over its votaries—Noble ideas it has given the Mongols—Immortality of the soul—Ten black sins—Five *Zabsar ugwei* sins — Rewards and punishments—Humanity—Heaven and Hell—Power of prayer—Adaptation to the capacity of its votaries—Motives are recognized—Resemblances between Buddhism and Christianity—Buddhism hinders material prosperity; by the number of lamas; by its arrogant self-sufficiency—Hinders learning—Oppression exercised by the lamas—Deceit practised by them—The living Buddha system—The lama system a curse; to the lamas themselves; to the people generally—Buddhism has no intelligent worship—Buddhistic worship is debasing—Buddhistic good works often do harm—Buddhism makes men sin in actions which are indifferent—Buddhism fails to produce holiness—Buddhism is a usurper.

THIS chapter does not profess to give a systematic account of Buddhism. On that subject numerous and learned treatises have been written, with which most people are more or less familiar. What I propose here to do, is to consider the superficial aspects of Buddhism—the practical part of it, as embodied in the life and habits of the Mongols at the present day.

One of the first things the missionary notices in coming into contact with the Mongols, is the completeness of the sway exercised over them by their religion. Meet a Mongol on the road, and the proba-

bility is, that he is saying his prayers and counting his beads as he rides along. Ask him where he is going and on what errand, as the custom is, and likely he will tell you he is going to some shrine to worship. Follow him to the temple, and there you will find him one of a company with dust-marked forehead, moving lips, and the never-absent beads, going the rounds of the sacred place, prostrating himself at every shrine, bowing before every idol, and striking pious attitudes at every new object of reverence that meets his eye. Go to the quarters where Mongols congregate in towns, and you will find that quite a number of the shops and a large part of the trade there are dependent upon images, pictures, and other articles used in worship. Go to Mongolia itself, and probably one of the first great sights that meets your eye will be a temple of imposing grandeur, resplendent from afar in colours and gold. Approach tents, and the prominent object is a flag-staff with praying-flags fluttering at the top. Enter a tent, and there right opposite you as you put your head in at the door, is the family altar with its gods, its hangings, its offerings, and its brass cups. Let them make tea for you, and before you are asked to drink it a portion is thrown out by the hole in the roof of the tent, by way of offering. Have them make dinner for you, and you will see a portion of it offered to the god of the fire, and after that perhaps you may be asked to eat. Wait till evening, and then you will see the little butter lamp lighted, and set upon the altar as a pure offering. When bed-time comes, you will notice as they disrobe, that each and all wear at their breast charms sewn up in cloth, or



MONGOL CHARM.

pictures of gods in metal cases with glass fronts. In the act of disrobing, prayers are said most industriously, and not till all are stretched on their felts does the sound of devotion cease. Among the first things in the morning you will hear them at their prayers again, and when your host comes out with you to set you on your way, he will most likely give you as your landmark some cairn, sacred for the threefold reason that its every stone was gathered and laid with prayer, that prayer-flags flutter over the sacred pile, and that it is the supposed residence of the deity that presides over the neighbourhood.

Nor is this all. The Mongol's religion marks out for him certain seemingly indifferent actions as good or bad, meritorious or sinful; he has days on which he will not give, days on which he may bargain but may not sell, places to be avoided and places to be frequented, times to perform certain works, and times to refrain from works. There is scarcely one single step in life, however insignificant, which he can take without first consulting his religion through his priest; and the result of the consultation is probably an answer which will cause him great trouble and annoyance. But he submits to it. Not only does his religion insist on moulding his soul and colouring his whole spiritual existence, but it determines for him the colour and cut of his coat. Perhaps no other religion on the face of the earth holds its votaries clutched in such a paralysing grip. It would be difficult to find another instance, in which any religion has grasped a country so universally and completely as Buddhism has Mongolia. The Mongols themselves

say that some of them have more piety, some have less, but that throughout the length and breadth of the country there is not a single infidel. I partly believe it, and it is this universality of dominion which enables the religion to build such rich and costly temples in such a poor and thinly-peopled country.

The Mongols themselves are in the habit of saying, that before Buddhism came to them, they were in ignorance and darkness, given up to deeds of superstition and cruelty, and addicted to such practices as putting their mother to death when she reached the age of fifty. Now, they say, see what we are and how we act—all this has been brought about by the sacred books.

The most prominent doctrine in their religion is *the immortality of the soul.* This their mind grasps firmly and clearly. I never yet met a man who for a moment doubted it, or hesitated in the least when asked to tell what he knew about it. They scorn the thought that the soul began its life with the body, and scorn the idea that its life should end with the death of the body. For countless thousands of ages the soul has been living on, sometimes taking one birth, sometimes another; for countless thousands of ages it shall live on, taking higher or lower births, according to its merits or sin; but still the same individual soul, the same unchanged spiritual being. There never was a time when the soul was not alive, and there never shall be a time when it shall not be alive. And this is not a doctrine that is held simply as an article in their creed, and referred to by the

learned only in their discussions; it is an ever-present feeling with young and old, learned and illiterate, with man, woman, and child. The body is merely the case or shell in which the soul lives; it is not the man, any more than the house is the inhabitant; and nowhere is their faith in their soul's distinctness and independence more apparent, than in the manner in which they take the dead body which has been vacated by the soul, and cast it out on the waste, to feed the wolves and the birds.

Moreover, they acknowledge souls not in men merely, but also in every living thing. The beast, the bird, the insect, the reptile, are animated by souls as everlasting and as capable of great things as their own. The bodies of these beings are, in fact, only soul-cases; and at a former period their own souls, as they suppose, may have taken such births, and may take such births again. Mongolia is thinly peopled, and Mongols have much solitary travelling and herding, but they are not alone, as we should be. Everywhere around them, in the flocks they herd, in the beasts they ride, and in the birds that flit past them, and in the insects that annoy them, they recognize spiritual existences.

The Mongol's religion has its *Decalogue*; not that of Moses, but a list of ten black sins, divided into three classes, according as they are committed by the Body, the Tongue, or the Mind. Those of the Body are three in number, viz.:—killing; uncleanness; theft. Those of the Tongue are four in number, viz.:—the false word; the harsh word; the slanderous word; the idle word. Those of the Mind are three

in number, viz. :—covetousness ; malevolence ; heresy. Killing includes not only the taking of human life, but also the taking of the life of any animal, even to the insect or reptile.

But the list is not yet complete. In addition to the ten black sins there are five *Zabsar ugwei* sins. *Zabsar* is a split, crack, little opening—an interval of space or time. The black sins are bad enough, and are to be followed by terrible punishments in purgatory, which, however, may alternate with periods of comparative comfort. The *Zabsar ugwei* sins are worse, and to be followed by a hell of intense suffering, and that without cessation.

The five *Zabsar ugwei* sins are patricide ; matricide ; killing a Doctor of Divinity ; bleeding Buddha ; sowing hatred among priests. By a Doctor of Divinity is meant a lama of exalted learning, and who is under more and stricter vows than the common priests. Drawing blood from the body of Buddha is a figurative expression, after the manner of Hebrews vi. 6, which speaks of backsliders 'crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame.'

No religion could promise more in the way of rewards, and scarcely any religion could threaten more in the way of punishments. The Mongol believes that his future state depends on his actions in his life. At death his good and bad actions are balanced against each other. If the good are more, he rises in the scale of existence ; if the bad are more, he sinks. Hence it is that his religion has such a practical effect on him. He goes on long, difficult, painful, and expensive pilgrimages, because he is

taught that it is meritorious. He makes costly offerings to temples and to the lama class, because he believes this has its reward. He feeds the hungry, he clothes the naked, gives tea to the thirsty, and relieves the oppressed, because these things have their reward, and go into the scale that decides his fate. He endeavours to eschew evil and follow righteousness, because these things have their reward. Evil in all its forms he tries to avoid, because he believes that every sin will weigh against him, and drag him down in the scale of being. As surely as plants grow according to their kind from their seeds, so surely shall joy grow from good, and pain from evil. Making merit occupies a large part of a Mongol's thought, and all animated existence that comes within his reach is the better treated, because his religion teaches him that kindness shown to the meanest creature receives the same reward as if the recipient had been the most exalted in the universe.

Thus it comes that his religion teaches the Mongol the noble lesson of *humanity*. Perhaps nowhere will you find less cruelty than in Mongolia. Not only do their cattle and flocks receive expressions of sympathy in suffering, and such alleviation of pain as their owner knows how to give, but even the meanest creatures, insects and reptiles included, are treated with consideration. One of the best proofs of the habitual kindness of the Mongol, is the tameness of the birds on the plateau. Crows perch themselves on the top of loaded camels, and deliberately steal Chinamen's rusks and Mongol's mutton, before the very eyes of the vociferating owners; hawks swoop down

in the market-place at Urga, and snatch eatables from the hands of the unwary, who simply accuse the thief of patricide and pass on; and swallows, year after year, build their nests and rear their young inside the very tents of the Mongols. A Mongolian's pity seems to flow out freely towards the suffering of all creatures, even the meanest and most vexatious. My bald-headed camel-driver was nearly driven to distraction one evening by a cloud of mosquitoes, which kept hovering over and alighting on his shining pate. During the night there came a touch of frost, and when we rose in the morning not an insect was on the wing. Looking at them as they clung benumbed to the sides of the tent, he remarked, 'The mosquitoes are frozen;' and then added, in a tone of sincere sympathy, the Mongol phrase expressive of pity, '*Hoarhe Hoarhe.*' There was no sarcasm or hypocrisy about it.

The *popular idea of heaven* is, that it is a place where hunger and thirst are felt no more, where there is no more sickness or weariness, no more suffering or pain, no scorching heat, no biting cold; a place where the holy in perfect bliss rejoice in the shade of trees green with perpetual spring, and pluck fruits mellow with perpetual autumn; a place where old friends meet and pass their existence for ever, within sound of ceaseless prayers, which are said for the benefit of all animated beings. The tortures of hell, or purgatory, whichever you may prefer to call it, are described with a minuteness and detail too horrible for us to dwell on; but there is one thing worth remarking, that is, the fitness of the punishment to the

sin. Just take one example. A man has lived and died a glutton. The consequence is, that he is punished by hunger. He is born with perhaps a body as large as a mountain, and a stomach capacious as a cavern; food is within his reach, and he is as hungry as all the wolves in Siberia; he would eat, but his mouth is as small as a needle's eye, and his throat is as narrow as a hair. Gluttony was his sin, and hunger is his punishment. It is the same all through; a man's punishment springs directly from his sin.

Another of the good things of Mongol Buddhism is *the power it ascribes to prayer.* On one occasion a lama came to my tent, and asked me to divine for him. I said I could not divine, and asked him what the matter was. He said that the other day his temple had been robbed, and he wanted me to discover in what direction the thief had gone. Next morning I pitched my tent at the temple, when, hearing the sound of long-continued services, I asked what it meant, and was told that they were holding services, in the hope that their god would have the thief apprehended. That very day the thief was brought in, and still the sound of service went on. Asking again, I was told that they were now holding a thanksgiving service.

Every Mongol believes most devoutly in the value of prayer. Many of his prayers are mere charms, perhaps, or simple repetitions; but no concurrence of circumstances can arise in which he does not believe it advantageous to say them. As to the decision of the nature of his future state, he believes

not only that he must pray, but also that he must work. Many instances of works could be quoted. I heard of a man who kept silver beside him bound up in little parcels of three mace, and gave one of these packets to every lama, good, bad and indifferent, who came and asked for it. I have seen miles of stony road cleared and smoothed, and the stones piled up in pyramids by the pious hands of one man.

Mongol Buddhism affords *doctrines and speculations* whose depth and magnitude surpass the grasp of the greatest minds. For the understanding of the weak, it veils its glory, comprehends itself in the smallest possible compass, and gives the ignorant six syllables, *Om mani padmi hum*, to pronounce, as the sum and substance of all. If a man's spirit is of a wandering nature, or disinclined to devotion, it puts into his hand a wheel filled with prayers, and tells him to turn that, and it will count as if he had repeated the whole of the printed formulæ contained in it; and if even this is too much for him, he can depute the duty to the flutter of a flag or the crank of a windmill.

It is scarcely possible to believe that the present Mongols are the descendants of those who rode behind Genghis Khan in his wild career of bloodshed and slaughter. Their bravery seems completely gone. Not long since a perfect stampede was created in Central Mongolia, by the report that robbers had been seen travelling together in a body. Everybody fled; flocks and herds were driven off, heavy goods abandoned, and a large district left without inhabitant. The panic overtook a caravan in which were some

travellers in camel-carts. The camel-carts were left in the desert, and the whole company fled to the hill country. For some weeks the Russian post was interrupted, and things looked serious. It was afterwards discovered that it was all a mistake. The supposed robbers were a few people going to Urga to pray; so few that even had they been robbers of the bravest, a tithe of the men who fled might have driven them off; and the whole flight might have been prevented had there been found one man with bravery enough to reconnoitre the supposed enemy. More than the half of the male population now are lamas, who of course from their vows could never be warriors.

Mongol priests recognize the power of motive in estimating actions. One night a hungry dog entered my tent, and stole nearly my whole stock of mutton. A day or two afterwards, in talking of the event to a lama, I asked him, in joke, if he would consider that I had any merit in thus feeding the starved animal. 'No,' said he keenly, 'you did not mean to do it, and you were sorry for it when it was done. If you had voluntarily taken the mutton and fed the dog, your act would have been meritorious; but as you did not mean to do it, you get no merit by the event.' And so throughout all their actions. The attitude of the mind decides the nature of the act. He that offers a cup of cold water only, in a proper spirit, has presented a gift quite as acceptable as the most magnificent of donations. The theory of the religion, and even the popular notion of it, lays stress on the attitude of the spirit in prayer also; but the practice so notoriously disregards the spirit and exalts the letter,

that on this point it is impossible to say a friendly word.

Many of the teachings of Buddhism resemble those of our own Christianity. To enumerate them all would take up too much time and space. It will suffice to speak of a few. The flood. The teaching of this narrative—the destruction of the wicked, and the escape of men and animals for the sake of one righteous man—agrees quite with Mongol doctrine. Abraham, a man the result of whose faith and piety is felt to the latest ages; Joseph and David, men whose faith carried them through the mightiest adversities, up to the highest rank of honour; these three the Mongols hail almost as heroes of their own religion, while the story of Elisha multiplying the widow's oil (2 Kings iv.), they say is exactly like their own legends. The parable of the prodigal—sin followed by suffering, and repentance by forgiveness—and of the Pharisee and publican, they also welcome as orthodox; but that which delights their hearts most of all, is the picture of the Good Samaritan beside his kneeling camel, pouring medicine on the wounds of the sufferer. When they see how he has bound up the wounded parts, and hear how he conveyed the wounded man to the inn, paid his reckoning, and gave him something to go on with, their enthusiasm rises, because they recognize in the Samaritan the ideal of their own religion—self-denying help to the distressed. Though the listeners are frequently lamas, they never fail to express their hearty disapprobation of the red-coated priest who passed by on the other side. 'The religions are one. The dress is different. The meaning

is the same. Exactly alike.' These and similar phrases are constantly on the lips of Mongols who listen to such parts of our Bible as are mentioned above. These phrases are often uttered unthinkingly, and sometimes by men who wish to draw the conversation to a close, that they may ask what your coat is made of, or if you have a telescope; but such expressions are not always the result of indifference. Even the Christian student of their literature is often struck with points of resemblance, and finds cause to be glad that Mongol Buddhism has such noble teachings.

The great points of contrast are—the Christian doctrine of one life of probation, the resurrection of the body, salvation by faith on Christ, as opposed to their doctrine of escape by works, creation by a pre-existent Creator, and government of the world by the same all-powerful Creator. On these points, the two—Christianity and Buddhism—are diametrically opposed; but, with the exception of these and a few others, the teachings of the two religions bear a striking resemblance.

This, then, is what is to be said in favour of Buddhism as now existent in Mongolia. It is a religion of mighty power, of noble teachings, adapting its precepts and exactions to the meanest capacities and the most comprehensive intellects; searching behind the actions of men, and trying their motives; quenching the thirst for blood in fierce tribes, and moderating them into kindness and hospitality; a religion some of whose teachings rise nearly to the level of inspiration itself; a religion which has, perhaps, mor

redeeming qualities than any other false system of worship which the world has yet seen.

Having thus spoken as far as I could, justly and impartially, in *favour* of the religion, it is only fair that its *faults and defects* should now be discussed.

Buddhism hinders the material prosperity of the country by the lamas swarming in Mongolia. Young and old, rich and poor, outwardly devout and openly wicked, you meet them wherever you meet human beings at all. Diligent and lazy, intelligent and stupid, men of prayer and men of trade, they are continually coming across your path. From personal observation, I am inclined to think that sixty per cent. of the male population of the country is quite a moderate estimate. The ambition of these men is to live by their religion. Most of them try, many succeed, and thus the energy of the country is clogged and crushed by the incubus of just as many men as can manage to find standing-room on the superstition and piety of the people. As for the lamas who cannot get a footing to support themselves on the religious needs of the people, they have to betake themselves to trade, work, herding cattle, or performing the most menial offices. Even by them the country is little benefited, because, having no families to support, they have no great stimulus to exert themselves much in any line, and, as a matter of fact, do just as little as they can—nothing more than hunger and cold compel them.

Buddhism hinders the material prosperity of the country *by its arrogant self-sufficiency.* Said a lama to me once: 'You foreigners are very clever in your

way. Your telegraphs, steam-boats, railways, postal system, newspapers, manufactures, trade and medical and scientific knowledge, are very well in their way; but you lack one thing—the knowledge of our religion and sacred books. Notwithstanding all you know, your mind is but like the mouth of this flour-bag, bound up and drawn together, and so contracted that nothing can enter. Read our books, and then'—shaking out the untied mouth of the flour-bag—'your minds will become enlarged in breadth and grasp, and you will have intellectual capacity enough to take in all the wonders of heaven and earth. You send letters and telegrams, and run to and fro to know things distant. The student of our books sits in his tent, and by the power of his attainments in learning, knows all things in all parts of the universe.'

This kind of assumption, which is perhaps more generally felt than expressed, has something to do with the repression of the spirit which prompts men to visit unknown countries, establish new lines of commerce, seek out unexplored knowledge, and generally improve the mental and material prosperity of a people. They have everything already; what more do they want? Let the English make, and the Russians and Chinese sell, their every article of dress and household furniture,—these benighted peoples, whose only thought is wealth and pleasure, who in fact live like the beasts;—let them busy themselves with these earthly trifles. A Mongol knows something better. He should occupy himself with his religion. This is the kind of feeling with which they regard us outsiders. To insinuate that their religion

lacked anything that was really worth a man's while to search after, would be heresy. On the same level of authority with which it speaks of the soul, sin and merit, reward and punishment, their Buddhism also settles, distinctly and definitely, all points of medicine, geography, and astronomy. If any man wants to study any one of these subjects—to the sacred books; what should he want outside of them? If a man has money to spend, let him spend it in acquiring merit; and not to seek to increase it by trade, like a worldly-minded Chinaman. If a man has time, money, and inclination to travel, let him go the round of the Buddhist sacred places and temples, and not ramble aimlessly over the world, like a demented Englishman. In this way, their religion always, tacitly at least, and often outspokenly, frowns upon any attempt at adding to knowledge, or advancing in any way from their present state. If a man prepares to venture on new fields of study or enterprize, he will find himself beaten back, or at least formidably opposed, by the united power of the piety, learning, and superstition of his country. The consequence is just what might have been expected. The Mongols can do nothing. They are dependent on others for everything. It might be supposed that Mongols would know at least how to fatten cattle. Perhaps they do, but one thing is certain—that the fat carcases displayed in butchers' shops in North China, though originally Mongol sheep, were not fattened by Mongolians. Chinamen go to Mongolia in spring, buy up likely animals, lead them till autumn in green pastures tend them well night and day, and

after that, the original Mongol would not know his own sheep. Even in the very thing which is a Mongol's born profession, he is outdone by the superior intelligence and enterprise of the Chinaman. Ask a Mongol why this comes about, and he will tell you it is because his countrymen are deficient in ability. Examine and investigate the cause of this lack of ability, and you will find that much, if not all the blame, is to be laid at the door of his religion, which systematically and persistently frowns upon and opposes every attempt at increasing knowledge and enterprise, without which increase of prosperity is an impossibility.

Mongol Buddhism hinders learning. About three-fourths of the Mongol children go to school, but not more than about one-tenth of them ever learn to read. Those who can write decently are fewer still. The reason of this is, that their Buddhism insists on their learning Tibetan; that is, learning the pronunciation of words, so that they may be able to read, that is pronounce, the words of the sacred books. Arrived at this state of perfection, they think they know enough, and rest content. Priests, lamas, seldom can read a word of their own language. Most of the few laymen who can read Mongolian have studied it in the hope of government employment. A few lamas do read—say three or four per cent. Of the laymen more can read—say thirteen or fourteen per cent. This is a lamentable state of matters. It is much worse than if only the same percentage of Chinamen could read; for while the Chinese character is difficult, the Mongolian, having an alphabet like



MONGOL LAMA OF HIGH RANK.

our own, is very easy; and it is much easier to learn to read Mongolian than English, because the words are spelt much nearer their pronunciation than in our own language. That so few people can read is therefore a heavy charge against Buddhism, because the whole effect of its influence is to deter men from learning.

The oppression of the lamas is another charge I have to make against Mongolian Buddhism. The lamas oppress the people by their exactions. Suppose a man gets sick. He sends for a doctor. He is a lama. He must have his fee. Be the patient rich or be he poor, the money, or the sheep, or the ox, or the horse must be forthcoming, else the medicine is not forthcoming. The only oppression about this is in the case of the poor, from whom medical help is withheld if they cannot make some return. But this is not all. Work without prayer is of no avail. The patient has medicine, he must also have lama services, or perhaps temple services even. What then? Does the temple—do the lamas exact fees for praying? No, they don't *exact* them; but they *expect* them, and the people are trained to believe that they need expect no good from their prayers, except they make handsome donations to the lamas or the temples employed. If he is rich, he spends sheep, camels, horses, oxen, money. If he is poor, he must still find something. If he gets better, all right; the lamas have the gifts and the credit of the recovery. If he dies, so much the worse for him, and so much the better for the lamas. They merely say, 'Oh, his true time to die had come and when that comes there is

no escape.' But they are not yet finished. Prayers must be said, and services held for the benefit of the departed soul. More gifts must be made, more money must be spent. When sickness and death enter a Mongol's tent, they come not alone; they often come with poverty and ruin in their train. I know a man who was once rich in cattle and herds. He had flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, droves of horses, and strings of camels. Now he has not a sheep to bleat at his door. It is the old story, too common in Mongolia. Sickness came, then death; first of one child, then of another, till of a large family only one son and one daughter remain. The stricken parents spared no expense on doctors and prayers to save their children; then, after death took their sons and daughters, lavished out their means on prayers and services on behalf of the departed souls. Now they are old, poor, head-and-ears in debt, and he who once was famous and rich, and regarded the countenance of no man, is fain to eke out his unhappy existence on the proceeds of begging, borrowing, teaching, and a government office worth twelve taels a year. No language is too strong to use in the condemnation of these merciless robbers, who 'devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers;' and no terms are too severe for the reprobation of a system which fattens and gorges itself by torturing the feelings of natural affection, when laid bare and bleeding from sorrow and bereavement.

Many lamas are, I doubt not, quite sincere. They are not so much deceivers as deceived. But the whole system is founded on deception, and the wires

are pulled by lamas fully conscious of the frauds. Take three instances.

At Wu T'ai, there is an image in a little temple over the gateway of the village. From this idol, we were told quite seriously, light streams far and near on certain days of the month. This of course raises the fame of the temple, and brings revenue; and most lamas perhaps believe it, but those who carry on the deception know all about it. This is merely one case of a class, and it is on devices like this that the lamas rely, to keep up the reputation of themselves and their temples.

When famous lamas die and their bodies are burnt, little white pills are reported as found among the ashes, and sold for large sums to the devout, as being the concentrated virtue of the man, and possessing the power of insuring a happy future for him who swallows one near death. This is quite common. I heard of one man who improved on this, by giving out that these pills were in the habit of coming out through the skin of various parts of the body. These pills, called *sharil*, met with a ready sale, and then the man himself reaped the reward of his virtue, and did not allow all the profit of it to go to his heir.

The living Buddha system — living Buddhas, Gegens, as they are called, abound in Mongolia. Peking boasts two inside the walls, and another outside, at the Yellow Temple. The current belief is, that these men when they die take another birth, remember their former state, and prove their identity by using phrases characteristic of the former Buddha, selecting things that belonged to him from among a

heap of things that were not his, describing the temple, lamas, etc. Great parade is made of the testing of the child. The truth of the matter is, that the head lamas arrange everything, and 'coach' up the child; but the common people, perhaps the majority of the lamas even, believe the hoax most implicitly. Those who manage the business are as conscious of the fraud as they are of their own existence, and it is even whispered that the Gegen is not only their dupe, but their victim, ruled with a rod of iron, honoured and made much of as long as he is yielding to the board of lamas, but quietly poisoned or otherwise murdered when he begins to be refractory, or, discovering his power, tries to exercise his own will. The living Buddhas are the pilllars of the present Mongol religious system—a system that owes its support to deliberate fraud and falsehood, and that on the part of its highest lamas.

The great sinners in Mongolia are the lamas, the great centres of wickedness are the temples. It is the system which makes the lamas, and places them in hot-beds of vice. Few lamas have any hand in their assuming the sacred garb. When children of six or ten years of age, their parents or guardians decide that they shall be lamas. The little fellows are pleased enough to put on a red coat, have their heads shaven, carry about the leaf of a Tibetan book between two boards, and be saluted as lama. It is all very fine at first. As mere children they do not know how much the full extent of their vows means. After some years they do know, but then it is too late to turn back. They cannot get free from their

vows—they cannot keep them; so they break them repeatedly and systematically; their conscience is seared, and now that they are started they do not stop with merely violating vows they cannot keep, but, having cast aside restraint, and acquired a momentum in sin, they go on to the most unthought-of wickedness. Thus it comes that the great lama religious centres are the great centres of sin. The head-quarters of Mongol Buddhism is Urga, where Satan's seat is. If you go there you will be warned never to go out after dusk, except you are well armed; and a foreigner who knew something of the place once remarked that he believed that the lamas there lived in the daily practice of all the sins known among men, murder alone excepted. Most of these men, had they not as children become the victims of this cursed system, might have lived useful lives, free from at least the grosser forms of iniquity, which as lamas they drink up like water.

The lama system is a curse to the people generally. Like priest, like people. The influence of the wickedness of the lamas is most hurtful. It is well known. The lamas sin not only among themselves, but sow their evil among the people. The people look upon the lamas as sacred, and of course think that they may do what lamas do. Thus the corrupting influence spreads, and the state of Mongolia to-day, as regards uprightness and morality, is such as makes the heart more sick the more one knows of it. I suppose there are good lamas here and there, and I do not forget that the guilt of sin lies upon the sinner himself, not upon a system; but, nevertheless, the

guilt of the tempter is as great as that of the sinner; and *this* guilt must be laid at the door of the system of lamaism, which Mongol Buddhism regards as one of her brightest ornaments.

Mongol Buddhism has hardly any intelligent worship. Most of the prayers are Tibetan; but there are a few Mongol prayers in use also, which the users seem to understand more or less. Make allowance for this—say one per cent., to be very liberal—and then it is safe to say, that Mongol Buddhism has no intelligent worship. The reason the Mongols themselves give for using Tibetan in preference to Mongolian is, that as water when poured from one cup into another becomes less in quantity and loses its purity, so the prayers suffer in translation from one language to another. So they keep to the Tibetan, and maintain that the merit lies in saying the prayer, not in understanding it. They carry this out to its legitimate results.

I once saw a huge pile of a ten-volume work in a Mongol's tent, and asked what use was made of it. I was told it was read through once a year. As this would have been a good task for the owner, who was fonder of whisky than piety, I asked a little more about it, and was told there was no difficulty in the matter. Ten lamas were sent for to the temple, entered a tent prepared for their use, took each man his volume, and the whole ten rattled away simultaneously till the task was completed. This is no exaggeration. Ask almost any lama the meaning of his prayer, and he will think you a queer fellow, even to ask such a thing. Remember the windmills

and the prayer-wheels, and there you have proof that the worship is neither intelligent nor spiritual. It is simply mechanical, whether performed by the mouth, the hand, or the windmill. The worship is simply a hollow form—nothing more.

There is an improvement on mechanical worship even. In the cupboard under the altar in a Mongol's tent, I once came upon a bundle nicely done up. I was curious to see what was in it; but the very mention of opening it threw the Mongol into a state of excitement, and he hastily explained to me that it had been put up by a celebrated lama, and that its very existence there was sufficient to bring luck to the tent and merit to the inhabitants.

The Buddhistic worship is debasing. The lamas make much of the attitude of the mind in devotion; they say, indeed, that in offerings and worship the state of the mind is everything. They also maintain that in bowing before idols, the worship is not directed to the image, but to that which the image represents. This is all very well in theory, but as we are now dealing with the practical aspects of Buddhism, it is impossible to overlook the fact, that the great mass of the people worship the lumps of brass, wood, or mud before which they bow. A devout Mongol has to worship not only images, but must also pay his devotion to books, father and mother, and above all his Bakshi or teacher. His teacher he esteems more than father and mother; to the latter he owes his body; to his teacher he owes the enlightenment of his soul. Nay, he ranks his teacher as high as Buddha himself. Buddha's revelations are great and

good, he says, but except through his teacher he would never have known them; and thus it is that he ranks his teacher on a level with Buddha. Some even speak more boldly, and hold that the teacher does more for them than Buddha, and therefore deserves more honour. In this way it comes about that Buddhism takes a man, sinful, vile, passionate, full of lies and duplicity, a man whose imperfections and sins you are perfectly acquainted with, and sets him up as your highest object of reverence.

Buddhistic good works often do more harm than good. To relieve distressed animals is meritorious, say the Buddhist books. Country Mongols sometimes, on going out at the gate of the great lama temple in the city of Peking, find a Chinaman sitting with sparrows cooped up in cages. The sparrows are for sale cheap —a cash or two each. He appeals to the Mongol, and not in vain. It is a chance to make merit cheaply, so the latter buys one or two birds, sets them at liberty, and goes away with the comforting feeling that he has done a meritorious action. He has let two sparrows free, and by that very act causes other three to be trapped. Indeed, it was simply to meet the Mongol demand that these sparrows were caught; and thus from want of a little reflection, he causes birds to be distressed by the very act of relieving them. This is a small matter, and the thing is so apparent that most of the town Mongols are not to be caught thus. A more serious matter is the giving of alms. Almsgiving is a splendid virtue in itself, blessing him that gives and him that takes, when carried on with discretion. When carried on without

discretion, it becomes, as in Mongolia, a blast and a curse to the land and the people.

Indiscriminate charity has flooded the country with beggars. Not only do you find sturdy fellows begging round the country, under the shallow pretence of praying for the good of the land, but mounted beggars are quite common. Beggars ride in Mongolia, and sometimes ride good horses too. They come and live on the best the tent affords, and, not contented with this, expect a gift in money or kind when they leave. No one likes to refuse admittance or withhold the gift, lest the lama should blast them with his curse. The clover in which beggars revel induces many to adopt the profession, who have not the excuse of helpless poverty; and not only do these fellows ride about on horseback, but some of them band together in companies, and travel about with camels and a tent. However, there is another side to this picture. One of the saddest pictures to be seen anywhere is in the market-place of Urga, where human beings lie night and day on the stony ground, covered with a few scraps of filthy skins and cast-off felts. Most of them have no fire, and there they lie exposed to the intense frost that prevails five or six months of the year, and to the piercing night winds which blow all the year round. Said a Buriat once to me, as we stood looking at them; 'These are worn-out creatures; the half of them die.' The truth of his words was manifest, when morning after morning one lair after another was found empty. Such is the end of the Mongol beggar when he becomes too weak to beg more.

The inducement to go to the Urga market-place is the fact that people of the place, and pilgrims, with an eye to merit, prepare food by the pailful, and have it distributed to the famishing. The manner of distribution is unique. One man takes the pail and a ladle; the instant he is seen approaching, men, women, and children, producing from the breast of their garments the ever-present cup, rush at him, and he would never reach the helpless creatures at all, did not his companion, a stalwart lama, lay about him with a pole about eight feet long, and keep back the eager crowd. Skirmishes and fights ensue over the spoil, and the whole crowd behave more like a pack of savage dogs than human beings. This is one of the deplorable fruits of that charity without discretion which has some attractive things about it, but which in reality causes more suffering and misery than it relieves.

Mongol Buddhism makes men sin in actions that are really indifferent. To kill sheep, for instance, as food, is right enough in itself. Buddhism says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' But a Mongol must have mutton, so he invents all manner of excuses. If he is within reach of a market, he goes there and buys, persuading himself that he has no hand in the killing of the animal. He pretends not to see that by purchasing the flesh he makes himself partaker in the sin of killing. The lamentable thing is, that the Buddhist finds himself hampered with so many impossible commands, which he finds he cannot keep, that by a constant practice of juggling with his conscience, he at last comes to have very vague ideas as to what he is

responsible for, and what he is not responsible for. When religion has succeeded in blinding a man, so that he cannot tell right from wrong, it has well-nigh prepared him for any sin, even the most atrocious.

There are, however, right-minded men in Mongolia, who do not stoop to such juggling at all. They say it is a sin, but mutton they must have; they cannot help it, so they go in for the sin, hoping to wipe out the stain by extra diligence in making merit. I once met such a man, and was the occasion of his being a good deal grieved. He was a lama, and sold me a sheep, engaging as part of his bargain to find me a layman to kill it. The sun set, and no layman turned up. If the animal had only been killed, there were plenty of lamas about who would have been only too glad to assist in skinning it and cutting it up; but no one would strike the blow. He had to take his sheep away again, and, in addition to being sorry at the loss of the money, he seemed much exercised in his mind because he, by selling the animal for slaughter, felt himself guilty of killing it; and as the transaction had fallen through, foresaw that he would have to sell it to some one else, and thus be twice guilty of killing the same sheep! It is impossible not to have sympathy with such straightforward men, in the superfluous dilemmas in which they are placed by the unreasonable demands of an over-exacting religion.

One day we pitched our tent near the abode of a family, which I found to consist of one old man and two old women. I asked for milk, and, as they were poor, offered to give them some rice in return. We

had been living on rice and millet for days, and were eager to taste milk. They had run out of grain, and for days had been living mainly on preparations of milk. They had plenty of milk and no rice; we had plenty of rice and no milk. Exchange was for the good of both parties. The old woman seemed to jump at the idea, but referred the question to the man, put the end of a fragment of a gun-barrel into her toothless mouth, and set about blowing the fire. The old man made short work of the question. He would like the exchange, but there was a religious prohibition for the day. It could not be done; so they must drink their milk, and we must boil our rice in water. So it seemed, at least; yet in a few minutes we had a basinful of good milk in our tent. The old women were pious, but not destitute of common sense; so, sending off the old man to look after the goats, they quickly brought us milk, and carried off the rice; and I hope did not shock the old man's piety by offering him a share of the spoil. This is only a sample of one among many vexatious prohibitions and requirements, and of the manner in which common sense often disregards them. These ordinances, which the Mongols feel binding upon them, cannot be thus disregarded without doing violence to the conscience; but, after all, the blame of disregarding such meaningless commandments rests, not so much with the offenders as with the system which appoints the ordinances.

Buddhism fails to produce holiness. It holds out the greatest inducements to virtue, and shakes the direst terrors over vice; but it succeeds neither in

destroying vice nor producing virtue. Religious Mongols steal, seemingly without the least sense of shame, and do not hesitate to tell lies, even when saying their prayers. A Doctor of Divinity of my own acquaintance on one occasion deliberately and predeterminately lied, that he might retain possession of a few inches of wood, which he knew belonged to a Chinaman close by; and the fact may perhaps not be generally known that the disciples of one of our Peking living Buddhas have quite a widespread reputation for being notorious thieves! It is unnecessary to multiply examples. Perhaps discouraged by long failure, Buddhism seems to have given up trying to make men good and pure, and seems to have no hesitation in extending her consolations and countenance, even to those who professionally live by the wages of iniquity. The great aim of religion is to make men good and holy, and when a religion fails in this so utterly that it gives up the attempt altogether, where, I would ask, can it find an excuse for its existence? 'It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden underfoot of men.'

Buddhism is a usurper. Apart from this, there is a superabundance of charges against this religion, sufficient to condemn it utterly again and again. But even though there were *no* other charges, *this* one would be sufficient to condemn it. It usurps haughtily and with a high hand the worship and honour due to Jesus Christ alone. By teaching that men can, unaided, free themselves from sin, and pass to the life beyond, from the regions of sorrow and suffering, it makes the Cross of none effect, and says that the death

of Christ was superfluous. It not only usurps His rightful dominion, but actually vaunts itself as greater and mightier than He; and this, too, when it knows itself to be an utter failure, quite incapable of performing the smallest of its many boasts; and is conscious, in the person of its highest officers, that, foundation and superstructure, it is a fabric of lies, warp and woof it is a tissue of falsehood. Lamas are either deceivers or deceived, or partly both; temples are gilded cages of unclean birds; the whole system is an utter abomination, an offence to God, and a curse to man. Let us pray for the speedy destruction of this religion, which haughtily robs God, and remorselessly pollutes and crushes man. May it soon fall, and its oppressions be replaced by the mild sway of that Master whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light; and may we at length see the Mongol leave off his pilgrimages and his vain repetitions, being taught that 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'

CHAPTER XII.

A MONGOL COURT OF JUSTICE.

'Have you medicine good for wounds?'—Mental tonic wanted—The justice-tent—The court opened—Onlookers—A row of prisoners waiting trial—Punishment—Manner of counting the lashes—Various cases—Conditional confession—The Governor-general—Fatality about confessing—Departure of the judge—Defiant prisoner.

ONE evening after sunset, a Mongol came furtively into my tent, and, after a few commonplace remarks, asked in an earnest whisper if I had any medicine good for wounds. I said I would like to see the wounds before giving medicine for them, and asked what sort of wounds they were and who had them. It turned out that the wounds were not yet inflicted, that the visitor was to be tried for theft next day, and as part of the examination was by scourging, he wanted to be prepared for the worst. In his own name, and that of a friend, he also preferred a very earnest request that I would give him some medicine to make his flesh able to endure scourging without feeling pain! If I could not furnish him with this, perhaps I might give him something to 'tighten up his mind,' so that he would not confess under torture! After quite a long and confidential conversation as to his guilt and prospects for the morrow, he rose to go, asking me to tell no

one of his visit, because he was in custody, and allowed to go about only by the kindness of his keeper. Next morning early, I had another visitor on the same errand; like his neighbour, he wanted something to heal his possible wounds, to harden his flesh, and to brace up his mind.

In the early morning a large tent of blue cloth fluttered gaily in the breeze. It was pitched just beyond the temple limits. The whole half-year's secular business of the tribe had been transacted in the temple buildings, but criminal proceedings could not be taken against culprits within the hallowed ground. Within the boundary it is not lawful to beat and whip men; so the thieves had to be examined outside the little footpath made by devout Mongols, who travel round and round the sacred precincts by way of religious duty. No one appeared to know exactly when the court would begin; but after a while stragglers seemed to converge towards the conspicuous tent, and the rumour got abroad that the mandarins had gone out to begin business.

The tent was open at both ends, and, with the exception of a contracted space down the centre, was packed full of mandarins of various ranks. Around the mouth of the tent was the disorderly crowd of spectators, who pushed each other about, and talked away among themselves without any seeming restraint. At the tail of the tent was another and smaller crowd, kept in a little better order by the angry commands of 'stand back,' shouted at short intervals by one or other of the dignitaries sweating under the heat that found its way through the cloth of the tent.

The tail of the tent had been opened to secure coolness by circulation of air, but, blocked up by a sweltering crowd at both ends, the circulation amounted to little; and the discomfort of the judges within was only exceeded by that of the trembling culprits who were led up and made to kneel before them. Behind the little table, on which were laid official papers, sat two or three mandarins with buttons of various kinds, but no one appeared to claim higher rank than his neighbours, and no one was seen to be specially presiding. Any one that liked seemed to say anything he liked, and frequently more than one spoke at once; and on more than one occasion a prisoner had to attend to the different sets of remarks made to him by two different mandarins at one and the same time. The noise of the two crowds of spectators outside, and the free and easy way of contemporaneous speaking inside, made it difficult to keep track of what was going on. It was hardly possible both to see and hear; so a good many of those really interested in the proceedings did not attempt to see, but knelt down outside the tent, and with bended head listened attentively through the cloth. Beyond the crowd in front of the tent sat a row of laymen and lamas, all looking very solemn and sedate. These were the prisoners waiting to be tried. No one seemed to watch them, and they were not handcuffed or bound in any way. They simply sat and waited till an attendant came and called them forward.

One case tried was that of two lamas. The reading of some charge of evidence or other could be heard indistinctly amid the hum and bustle, and then the

elder lama was led out in front of the tent and lay down in full view of the court. As the crowd fell back, a whip, a couple of rods, and the leather sole of a shoe, became apparent. The lictor asked which he was to use, and on being told to take the whip, proceeded to administer thirty lashes. The whip was really a formidable weapon, and looked alarming; but the whipper stood so close in towards the culprit that almost all the force of the thong was spent on the grass. This was farce enough, but this was not all. One, two, three, five, eight, nine, ten, eleven, thirteen, seventeen, twenty—counted the sturdy lictor, bringing up his whip with great display, and letting it gently down—twenty he counted, and as he counted twenty-one, an official standing near by shouted thirty. THIRTY, with tremendous emphasis shouted the lictor, and then rested his whip, as if his arm had been quite worn out with the great exertion. '*Oi yoi, yoi,*' sighed the victim as he got up, and the whole crowd of spectators laughed aloud; the sufferer joining in the laugh as soon as he got his face turned away from the court. Everybody seemed pleased, and what seemed to please them was the counting—twenty, twenty-one, thirty. The turn of the younger priest came next, but his was a more serious affair. He was uncovered, and his infliction was with a rod that left a mark at each stroke. The count, too, was carefully looked to, and when it jumped from three to five, the lictor was ordered to stop and be careful as to how he counted. This lama got his full complement of thirty strokes, and good strokes too.

Another case was that of cattle-stealing. Several

men were implicated, but the din and bustle made it impossible to hear whether the accused confessed and were punished for the deed, or did not confess and were whipped to make them tell the truth. Doubtless Mongols accustomed to the proceedings knew all about what was going on, but an unaccustomed spectator, hustled about, could only guess. One of the culprits was an old man with a decent dress and respectable look; and one of the judges inside the tent could be heard shouting to him: 'You are an old man, more than sixty, your life is almost past, you should know better by this time than to steal; if you are poor and hungry, beg; begging is better than stealing; if you beg, people will give you food.' Then after a little: 'After this will you be deterred (from stealing)? Will you be careful? Will you amend your ways?' He was then led forth, and had thirty slight lashes with the whip, without being deprived of the protection of his trousers. Concerned in the same case was a young lama who came next in turn, and was punished severely with the rod. No miscounting,—no laying it on light for him. He was about twenty years of age, and, according to the expressed verdict of the unofficial mob, just the sort of fellow to steal. The officials were evidently of the same mind, and took care that the scourging was no sham. Once they stopped the lictor, and threatened to have *him* whipped if he did not hurt the prisoner more. The young lama got fifty good ones, and seemed to get up with difficulty. Perhaps, too, he was tenderer than his neighbours, for he manifestly suffered severely.

Then came a complicated business of the theft of a single horse. Four or five prisoners were called up, and a long examination ensued. Several persons were beaten, among them the well-dressed, respectable-looking son of a man of official rank. This young man was the most decent-looking fellow among the prisoners. He had his thirty lashes by way of examination, and might have had more, if another man had not confessed under his torture, that he alone was the thief, and that the decent-looking young man was falsely accused. The man who confessed was the same who had come to me by night for medicine. His confession admitted that he had stolen the horse, and tied it up in the mountains till he should be able to convey it away secretly; but in his absence the wolves had come and devoured it; so he was none the better for his theft! His unsuccessful experiment was the cause of no little mirth to the official and unofficial spectators.

Another case was peculiarly Mongolian. A young lama was brought up accused of causing a prairie fire, which ran for miles and scorched a caravan of Halhas, encamped with camels and loads of tea in the long dry grass. The accused admitted the charge, but pleaded that it was unintentional; and appealed to the mercy of the court, reminding them that he was a quiet and orderly subject, and the sole support of his father, an old man aged eighty years. The court was evidently satisfied with the explanation, but the law must be magnified, which was supposed to be done when thirty nominal lashes were laid on lightly, not even his coat being removed; and the count being

so cooked that though *thirty* was counted, hardly more than fifteen were administered.

Another case elicited rather a curious confession. An elderly man under examination said, that *if his two companions in accusation would not own up*, he would take the responsibility of the loss. The judges seemed well satisfied with the arrangement, asked if he had means sufficient to make good the loss, and dismissed him without corporal punishment.

A few more cases followed, and then the greater part of the spectators dispersed, remarking that what was to come next was a civil suit, at which they evidently did not expect to see much beating and whipping, which seem to form the main attraction.

It must not be supposed that these beatings constituted the sole punishment of the thieves. Sentences of imprisonment were passed afterwards.

During the course of the proceedings, I had been endeavouring to distinguish the governor-general of the tribe; but in the crowd of mandarins in the tent, no one seemed to claim much higher rank than his neighbours. Returning towards my tent, a fat Mongol in a greasy old dress called me to him, passed salutations, conversed a little, then let me go. He had a couple of attendants hanging around near him, and an old lama came up as we were speaking. Two days afterwards meeting the old lama, I asked who that mandarin was who had been talking to me. It had been the governor-general *incog.* He had deputed his duties to the inferior mandarins; and while they were sweating in the crowded tent, bullying thieves, and speaking down each other, he had been enjoying himself lounging around.

A day or two afterwards, in my tent, I happened to ask an aged lama of some small rank in the temple, if he had been to see the trial of the thieves. Hitching himself round, and looking at me as if he thought I was taking some undue liberty with his dignity, he replied, 'No, no, no; do you think that a respectable man like me would go to see thieves tried?' This seemed to be the universal feeling on the matter—that it was an exhibition fit only for the eyes of boys and menials.

Towards sunset I had another visit from the prisoner who, the night before, wanted medicine for his wounds and bracing for his mind. How changed he seemed! He had had sixty strokes, and was to be sentenced to something or other, he did not as yet know what; but he seemed happy and radiant, and smiled all over. The anxiety and uncertainty had gone, he had confessed and been condemned; but had he been acquitted, he could not have seemed much more relieved. Though severely beaten, he had not received wounds, his mind did not now want any bracing, and it was evident that his confession had been an excellent tonic for his mental constitution.

A good many cases of theft were left untried at the close of the day, and how they were settled does not appear. The tent was not pitched again, and next morning early, the governor-general took his departure, conspicuous in his two-horse cart guided by a mounted driver, and preceded by a horseman carrying the seals of office in a box strapped on between his shoulders. This was the signal for a general scattering. Many Mongols had returned to their homes

before; those that were left now disappeared, the traders from Peking and other places who had come for the occasion departed to travel round the country; and the temple, which for a week had swarmed with men, and had its pastures adorned with scores of hobbled horses, resumed its normally deserted appearance, not to be again disturbed till the summer sacred festival would attract its crowds of traders and worshippers from the four quarters.

In travelling round the country afterwards, we met several of the prisoners at their homes, and every two or three days were reminded of the court of justice by hearing our Mongol servant counting, in a mock official tone of voice, seven, ten, eleven, fourteen, nineteen, twenty-one, THIRTY, as he hammered the tent-pins into the hard ground.

It turned out, too, that one of the prisoners at least did not get off so easily as the trial we had seen might have led a spectator to suppose. Another prisoner had taken the whole guilt upon himself, and thus freed his neighbour, who, at that time, was allowed to get off rather easily. Some time after, the man thus freed was sent for by the governor-general, and subjected to another examination. The accused was a man of means, and he was now charged with bribing his confederate to confess and take the blame. A severe castigation was administered to make him reveal the truth; but the man stood firm, and though there was a general feeling that he was guilty, he could not be made to confess, and had to be dismissed. The story goes, that after he had received the severe infliction of over a

hundred strokes, and the examination was ended, he got up with the bearing of an innocent man, showing his unbroken skin as proof of his innocence. 'You have broken several rods on me,' said he; 'see how I have stood it; are you satisfied now?' The Mongols have great admiration for a man who will thus dare and endure without confessing; and, however objectionable the examining by torture of witnesses may be, it affords good opportunity for inflicting pretty severe punishment under pretence of questioning men who are pretty well known to be guilty, but who cannot be convicted for want of conclusive evidence.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MONGOL PRISON.

Deputation from patients in prison—The staff of prison officials—A prison with open doors—Arrival of turnkey with candle—Appearance of turnkey—Chess-playing—Thunderstorm—The dungeon—Mongol prisoners not in danger of escaping—A feast in prison—Parting ceremonials—Irksomeness of confinement to Mongol prisoners.

A LITTLE, stoop-shouldered, one-eyed, stiff-jointed, bare-footed, elderly man, after being treated for some disease of his own, said he had come as a deputation from some patients who lived close at hand, and who were anxious that I should visit them.

On its being suggested that, if the distance was not great, and the patients not severely afflicted, perhaps it would be better for them to come to me, a young man sitting by said that they could not come; that the men in question were criminals confined in prison, and would not be allowed to come out. Of course I agreed to go, and offered to do so at once, but that would not do for the old man. He must first go back to the prison, put on his boots, and escort me over with proper formality.

He soon came with his boots on, and as we walked towards the place, the old man gave a detailed account of himself, his prison, and his prisoners. He was there on duty for a month only, and was sub-governor. There was a head-governor above him, a turnkey under him, a couple of soldiers to supply any force or do any fighting that might be needed, and six prisoners to be looked after. The head-governor did not live in the prison, so that, keepers and criminals, the total of the inmates was ten.

The two soldiers had gone out visiting, the turnkey had gone to buy a candle, he himself was escorting me, and the six prisoners, with open doors, had been left to look after themselves! There they were, the whole six of them, five lamas and one black man, standing staring at us over the low wall that surrounded the 'black-house,' as the prison is called. The turnkey had not arrived with the candle, and the old man was in a dilemma. It was too dark inside the house without a light, so I suggested that we might sit outside. The old man shouted his orders; a commotion was visible among the six pri-

soners; and by the time we arrived at the little gate in the low mud wall cushions were spread on the ground outside. All the usual formalities of salutation had to be gone through. Though the half of them were invalids and suffering more or less, when asked as to the state of their bodies, they all replied, as politeness required them to do, that they were in perfect health and comfort; and when, also in deference to custom, the condition and prosperity of their cattle were inquired about, they all hastened to affirm that their cattle were fat and flourishing, though the great probability was, that one-half of them had not a hoof to their name, and that those who owned animals had not seen them for months.

Salutations over, the prisoners crouched in front of the cushions, and the patients detailed their afflictions. Meantime the turnkey, holding a candle in one hand, and with his other steadying a couple of water-buckets that hung from his shoulder, came through the low doorway, staggering under the weight of his load. The candle was lighted, and we adjoined inside. The first thing noticeable in the darkness was the candlestick. Candlestick they had none; the beer-bottle, which in a civilized country would probably have supplied such a lack, is a scarce article in Mongolia; but cups and millet abound, so a cup was filled with millet, and the candle stuck into the centre. Mongols very seldom have candles to burn, but when they do find a candle, a cup filled with millet is a common substitute for a candlestick. The next most noticeable thing in the house was the turnkey, who still hovered around the newly-lighted

candle. The sub-governor wanted an eye; the turnkey was minus the nose, and a most lugubrious man he looked. His affliction interfered with his speech, and the depression in the centre of his face terminated in a dark hole, which gave him such a repulsive yet fascinating appearance, that it was almost impossible to keep the eye from following him and resting on his disfigurement.

Next day this turnkey escorted me to the prison. He turned out to be a government servant there on duty for a month, and so poor that he was glad to get employment at anything. This time it was broad daylight, and we surprised the inmates playing chess. For a board they had taken down one-half of a window-shutter, and scratched the form of the chess-board on it. Proper chess-men they had none; but the black man, being a scribe, had written on little flat pieces of wood, *camel*, *mandarin*, *child*, and so on, thus indicating the different kinds of men. With this makeshift board and these makeshift men, they were playing quite a keen game; both players and spectators protested against the positions being disturbed, and the chess-board was laid carefully away, that the game might be resumed where it was left off. A few minutes later, a terrible storm of wind, rain, and hail beat against the front of the house. The door was closed. One window had no shutters; the other aperture had no window, but shutters only. The one-half of the shutter was under a pile of clothes, keeping them from the damp of the *kh'ang*;[1] the other was laid away with the game of chess on

[1] A raised brick platform used for sleeping.

it; but as the storm beat into the room, the clothes were thrown aside, the chess-men were swept up, the shutters fixed, and with only one small window left, the *black-house* was true to its name.

The storm soon passed over, light was re-admitted, and the place once more became visible. There was little but bare walls to be seen. Two *kh'angs*, one at each end, without flues, and almost destitute of mats; a couple of broken-down-looking fireplaces, a pot, and a couple of water-buckets, comprised nearly the whole of the furniture in the place. All the floor, except two or three feet at each side, was wood. Near the centre was a trap-door with a little square hole cut in the middle. When this door was raised, it disclosed an underground room about ten feet deep, eight feet wide, and fifteen or twenty feet long, with mud floor, plastered walls, and the flooring of the prison for ceiling. This room had no furniture, and contained nothing of any kind. There seemed to be no air-holes or provision for ventilation, except the seams between the boards of the ceiling, and the little hole, about four or five inches square, in the trap-door. Outside the house there was conspicuous from afar a clumsy Chinese ladder. By means of this ladder, every night at dark, three of the prisoners were let down with their bedding to pass the night in this strong room. It was rather hard lines, even for a criminal, to pass eight or ten hours of the twenty-four in such a damp, stagnant hole, which never gets warm all the year round. It was summer-time then; but the keeper remarked, 'In the morning the men come up shivering with cold.'

One thing the dungeon afforded—safe keeping for the prisoners. Once let down into it, and the ladder withdrawn and placed outside the house, the three men were in no danger of getting out. The trap-door was fastened down firmly ten feet above their heads, and to mine themselves out they would have had to work through the solid earth. Experienced breakers of foreign prisons would doubtless have easily devised means of escape, but Mongols were safe enough. Three of the six were not compelled to sleep in the dungeon, but shared the comforts of the upper prison in common with the sub-governor, the turnkey, and the two soldiers.

The most remarkable thing about the prison was the amount of liberty allowed the prisoners. It seemed to be no uncommon thing for the keepers and soldiers to be away at the same time, when the prisoners were left at perfect freedom. It is true that on these occasions the keepers never went far, and kept continually casting glances towards the jail; yet it sounds strange to hear of half-a-dozen criminals left to roam at will inside and outside of the prison and the prison yard. The great distances and the naked solitudes of the country doubtless accounted for this. Suppose a prisoner ran away, where could he go? If he travelled, his track would not be difficult to find; and if he did not travel, where could he lie hid? During the night he might get away and baffle pursuit, but more care was exercised after dark. Another consideration, too, that makes jails easy to guard in Mongolia is this, that an escaped prisoner would doom himself to perpetual banishment. If he

returned home at any time, he would be instantly apprehended, and most Mongols would prefer to endure two or three years' imprisonment, to being compelled to skulk for life. The three prisoners that were allowed to sleep in the upper prison had almost completed their term of restraint; a few weeks or months more would make them free men; and in these circumstances they would not render themselves liable to fresh punishment by attempting to escape. The keepers knew this, and were not at all afraid to give them plenty of liberty.

The prison was pleasantly situated on high ground, overlooking a valley lively with flocks, herds, tents, and a couple of large Chinese trading establishments. Close at hand, but round the shoulder of a hill, and just out of sight, but within hearing, was a large temple. The monotony of prison life was much relieved by the sight of all the life and activity in the neighbourhood. People were riding to and fro, carts coming and going, flocks pasturing, horse droves conspicuous on the hill-tops, lamas in state coming to the temple and going off to the country on religious business, and government officials conspicuous with their buttons. These things the prisoners could see from their prison; frequently they stood looking at them over the low mud wall; but more frequently still they were to be seen crouching on the ash-heap in front of the gate. All prisons in Mongolia have not such a good prospect. Some of them are built in quiet situations, and have a wall about ten feet high round them, which shuts out nearly everything but the sky. Even then the fate of the inmates is not so

hard as it might be, because in most cases they are allowed to go outside the inclosure.

The last time I visited the prison they were having a feast. They had clubbed together and bought the head and some other parts of an ox slaughtered at the temple hard by, to supply rations to ten lamas engaged on the great summer services. The tongue they had slit and hung up to dry. The rest they were boiling. The pot was much too small for even the moiety they had in hand, but they piled it high above the rim, and kept industriously turning the raw parts down into the water. The fuel, too, was bad. They had a little argol, but that seemed damp, and was utterly insufficient; so they had gone out to the hills and pulled up by the roots a great quantity of southernwood, and that they used as fuel. The day before, it was blooming in all its August freshness and fragrance; now it was cast into the furnace, blazing a little and smoking a great deal. The Mongols rather like their meat half raw, and on this occasion they seemed to be having their taste gratified to the full. When one potful was pronounced to be *done*, the same half-shutter that had before acted as a chess-board was now called into requisition as a trencher, and covered with huge pieces of steaming meat and bone. With perfect liberty, fraternity, and equality, prisoners and keepers gathered round and did their best. Knives were 'scarce' and the table small, so they had to take it in turns; and one poor fellow was poorly that day, and had to sit apart and look at his companions feasting. His was a hard lot; they had such a feast but seldom; and to think that of

all the days of the year he should have been sick on that day!

On the termination of the last visit, the inmates offered hearty thanks for all the attention that had been paid them, and lamented that they had not been able to offer the universal token of Mongol hospitality—tea. Wishing to set them at their ease, I said I would taste their white food, which is the common compromise adopted when it is difficult or inconvenient to get tea. The sour white milk-cake was at once produced, and, in addition, some white flour scones basted in butter, which had come from the temple hard by. Though suffering as criminals, the five lamas had not been neglected in the temple ministrations, but a dole had been sent them as if they had taken actual part in the services.

Prisoners in Mongolia seem to have a good time of it. Perhaps they have, but it is not impossible that the modified kind of restraint to which they have to submit, proves to them as irksome as the severer discipline of other nations proves to more civilized prisoners.

One of the inmates of the prison, when asked how long he had been there, replied with exactness, stating the number of days. This showed how he felt. Mongols usually state time loosely, such as, more than three months, about a month, less than a year. This poor fellow was exact in his statement. He had been wearying and counting the days of his confinement. Our visits, for the time being, helped to relieve the monotony of their days, but this was only a temporary relief.

Months after we left, perhaps most of them were there still, crouching on the ash-heap, watching the riders as they came and went in the valley, and counting the days that must elapse before they themselves could again wander at their sweet will in the open plains.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHISKY IN MONGOLIA.

Have you caught the mares?'—'Is the *airak* good?'—The taste of *airak*—The distillation of whisky—Milking of mares not profitable—Leads to drunkenness—Fewness of teetotallers—Behaviour of a *good* man when drunk—Evils of drink—A whisky-loving living Buddha.

'HAVE you caught the mares?' Travelling in Mongolia, during the summer season, you will often hear your followers address this question to those who come about them. If 'No' is the answer, the questioner is a little disappointed. If the mares have been caught, the next question most likely will be, 'Is the *airak* good?' Then, perhaps, the man questioned asks the questioner to go and taste it. In Mongolia they catch the mares for the purpose of milking them. Properly speaking they catch the foals, not the mares; but it comes to the same thing, because when the foal is tied up the mare is secured, as she will not leave her offspring. Camels, cows, sheep, and goats leave their young and go to pasture;

but, as the Mongols say, the mare is unable to desert her foal, and stands half the day whisking her tail in patient idleness beside her tethered young. The foal is secured to let the milk gather. During the night and part of the day the mare and foal are allowed to roam over the plains with the drove. The milk that the foal then gets is supposed to be sufficient for its wants; the owner, by separating the foal from the mother, secures a part of the milk for himself. All cattle, or, as the Mongols say, the five tribes of cattle, are treated in the same way.

The Mongols milk anything they can lay hands on: goats, sheep, cows, camels, and mares. The milk of these different creatures has different qualities and is put to different uses. The number of different preparations of milk is great, but, as far as I am aware, mare's milk is put to only one use—making *airak* and *arrihae*. *Airak* is simply soured mare's milk stirred up. In Southern Mongolia they have earthenware jars about four feet high and a foot and a half diameter. In Central and Northern Mongolia there are skin bags of about the same dimensions. Into these each day's freshly milked pailful is emptied, and the whole mass frequently stirred up. Visitors have this served out to them frequently in huge bowls, or basins rather, which they empty rapidly and repeatedly. The drinkers are all right for a while, but if they keep at it long enough they get most decidedly drunk, and have a season of discomfort which arises in no small degree from the large quantity they have imbibed before reaching the goal of intoxication.

At the risk of my reputation as a teetotaller, I on two separate occasions tasted small quantities of this *airak*, and found it very much like 'sour milk' (buttermilk is the English name, I believe) which had been kept too long. This *airak* is the mother of *arrihae*, or whisky. The *airak* is put into a huge pot, covered with what looks like a barrel with both ends knocked out; a vessel is suspended in the middle of the barrel; a pot kept filled with cold water is set on the top, and after a few minutes' boiling, the vessel inside the barrel is found filled with pure and good whisky. The spirit thus distilled is much milder than that which the Chinese manufacture from grain, but is intoxicating when taken in considerable quantities. In districts where large horse droves abound, the quantity of spirit produced is large, and as it is consumed on the spot, the number of drunken men to be met is proportionately great.

As far as I am aware, this Mongol whisky is never exported; much of it is drunk almost as soon as it is made, and any that is left does not last long. Custom seems to demand that it should be presented to every visitor, and every visitor seems to think that custom requires him to consume all that is set before him. Rich men are proud of their droves, and like to indicate their wealth by the number of the foals tied up to the long rope, which is pinned down to the ground some little distance off, in front of their line of tents. They are proud of their whisky, the produce of their drove, and if you call on them, you come in for no stinted share of it. It seems quite poetical to see the simple-minded herdsmen of the plains drinking the

mild whisky of their own making, costing them no money and but little trouble. There are no excise-men, no duties, no smuggling. It comes easily, and goes freely, even to the hangers-on and poor dependents, who, at the season, do not fail to present themselves frequently on imaginary business, or to ask about their patron's welfare. This seems all very poetical, quite Arcadian indeed. Perhaps so, but it has its other side.

The milking of the mares is in no sense a source of profit. The milk they do not sell; and, as far as I know, they do not sell the whisky made from it. It never brings a single cash into the owner's pocket. Neither the *airak* nor the *arrihae* can be called food in any sense; and poetical, primitive, and simple as it may seem, it is a source of disaster and distress to the country. From their youth up, Mongols are familiar with the taste of the native spirit. They acquire a liking for it; a liking which the quantity produced in the country can by no means satisfy. As a consequence, they take to Chinese whisky, which is much stronger, and every ounce of which they have to purchase from Chinamen. It is not only when they go to Chinese towns that Mongols buy Chinese whisky. They do buy it then, perhaps; a Mongol rarely returns from a visit to the 'inner country,' as they call China, without a jar safely stowed away among his baggage; but unfortunately, whisky can be got anywhere, any day of the year. Chinese traders on a small scale go about the country in all directions. They have their little stock of goods packed on ox-carts, and move slowly along,

going round from one cluster of tents to another, trading mostly by barter, taking skins and produce in return for their wares. Skins and produce do not come handy for exact sums; so in many cases the account has to be adjusted by taking so many ounces of whisky—an article which no trader ever seems to be without. Even when there is not the flimsy excuse of an account to be adjusted, the temptation is too great for the simple Mongol. The pedlar comes into the tent, sits down and talks. At last the Mongol asks, 'Have you any whisky?' 'Yes.' 'Good?' 'Tip-top.' This is more than the Mongol can stand. 'Let me have some,' he adds, 'and I'll pay it again.' So he has it and drinks it, and is in debt for it, and it is just the same old story of inattention to business, things going to wreck, poverty, ruin.

All that the mare's-milk whisky is good for is to give the Mongols an appetite for the stronger and more expensive spirit made from grain. The milk-whisky succeeds in educating most of the Mongols into drinking habits, not excepting even the lamas, who, from their vow to abstain from drink, might be expected to be teetotallers. Teetotallers they are not. Among many hundreds I have met only one who would not take spirits; the common run of lamas drink as much as they can get. I do not remember ever having met a layman who refused to drink; and drunkenness is so common among all classes, that it is useless to make sobriety one of the qualifications in a Mongol servant you seek to engage. Mongols laugh and say, 'We all drink,' and the only point to be careful about

in hiring a Mongol, as far as drink is concerned, is to see that the man you have is not given to violence when he is drunk. 'A good man,' say they, 'when drunk, goes off to sleep; a bad man makes a disturbance.' A drunken man is about the only thing to be feared by the lonely traveller in the desert. When sober, a Mongol is good-hearted and friendly; or, if suspicious, he is careful and harmless; but once let his head get inflamed with drink, and he is reckless; friend and foe are alike to him, and his great knife is there at his side, and can be drawn with alarming ease and rapidity. Happy is it for all concerned, when the thoughtful and clever-handed mistress of the tent steals the weapon, and hides it among the furniture when she sees the quarrel coming. Several times I have been among people unfriendly and suspicious, but the only serious trouble or danger I have seen has been caused by men inflamed by drink.

The Mongols themselves are fully aware of its evils. They have instances every day. Gichick goes to a gathering. He has a fine snuff-bottle, and valuable silver ornaments, and rides a magnificent horse. He comes back on foot, his bottle, his ornaments, and his horse gone. Ask him, and he says, 'I got drunk, did not know what I was doing, struck Dimbril, wounding him seriously, and here I am.' Or a man drinks at a friend's tent, then mounts and rides homeward. His horse arrives riderless, and he is found dead on the plain. 'How did it happen?' 'He was drunk.' Or a man has been rich, the owner of droves, herds, and flocks. Now he is glad to earn his bread as a hired servant. 'How does this come about?' 'He

is fond of whisky.' This explains all; no more questions need be asked.

The Mongols are so sensible of the evils of whisky that frequently the lamas in authority, though by no means teetotallers themselves, forbid Chinese traders to come within a certain distance of the temples. I have often heard Buddhism praised, as a religion tending towards temperance. It is not so in Mongolia. One of the living Buddhas of high repute, and much sought after on account of his supposed power to confer blessings, has the reputation of drinking several catties of Chinese whisky daily, and is followed by a crowd of attendant lamas, who pass their lives drinking and quarrelling over the rich offerings brought by the devout to their whisky-loving master. The Mongols as a rule do not smoke opium. They have not money enough for that, but I do not think that I am exaggerating much, if at all, when I say that drink hurts Mongolia just about as much as opium hurts China.

The line of mares in front of the tent, the bustle of milking, the process of brewing, the hospitable welcome, the conviviality of drinking, are picturesque and pleasing, and have a charm to the eye of the cursory observer; but look more closely, and you find that these things are but the gaudy colour on the skin of the deadly serpent, the poison of whose bite brings calamity and death. If Christianity is ever to do any good in Mongolia, it must go hand in hand with teetotalism.

CHAPTER XV.

MONGOL TOILET.

Difference between the dress of men and women—A Mongol's robe is his room—Slovenly appearance of women's dress—Dressing—Washing—Mongols do not bathe—Snuff-bottle—Women's hair ornaments—Men's dress very becoming.

THE dress of both sexes, as far as shape is concerned, is much alike. The main difference is that the men gird themselves with a belt, while the women allow their long garments to hang loose from shoulder to heel, and hence it comes that the common word for 'woman' in Mongolia is 'beltless.' The outer garment of both sexes is a wide roomy coat which reaches down to the ground, with sleeves so ample that the arms can be withdrawn from them and reintroduced at pleasure, without disturbing the buttons.

This coat forms the blanket under which the wearer sleeps. Surrounded by this ample covering, the Mongol, withdrawing his arms from the sleeves, finds himself for all practical purposes inclosed in a little private tent from which his head only projects. Shrouded by it he rises from his couch in the morning, covered by it he sinks to rest at night, and the less happily situated foreigner cannot but envy the facility which this robe affords its wearer of dressing

and undressing in perfect privacy, though surrounded by the crowded inmates of a full tent.

Mongol women on rising button up their coats at once, and commence household duties. The long wide robe hanging loose gives them a very slovenly appearance; in milking and cooking the great part of the gown lies about on the dirty ground, and in general the women appear slatternly in the extreme. The loose gown once appeared to advantage. A traveller crossing the desert in a camel-cart, was for a time puzzled one forenoon to know what the woman, who, mounted on a camel, led his cart camel, was about. Her hands disappeared, and inexplicable leanings and movements were seen about the shoulders, till at last the gown slid off and revealed another, more suitable to the increasing heat of the day. The girl had managed to change her dress while riding her camel and leading the cart, and had done it so adroitly and modestly, that it was impossible to tell what she was about till the process was complete.

Men on rising usually crouch down close to the fire, open their coat and sit lazily warming themselves and smoking. After a while they look about for a short cotton garment which is worn under the coat, and which might by extension of courtesy be called a shirt. The production of this garment is usually the signal for the most unpleasant sensation that a foreigner is conscious of in connexion with Mongol dressing, as the shirt was probably new or washed six months ago, and has been constantly worn since!

Washing is another sight. The Mongols wash once a day. A little water is poured into the ever-present

wooden cup, from which it is either emptied little by little into the hand, or taken into the mouth and squirted out as needed. Washing is usually confined to the face and hands; neck and everything else not being regarded as standing in need of water. The washing itself is not so bad, but the 'drying' is a little out of the way. With his ordinary want of forethought, a Mongol usually begins to think how he is to get his face dried only after he has got it washed. As he looks round, dripping, most probably the first thing that catches his eye is the 'shirt' aforementioned, and it is pressed to do duty as a towel. A more provident Mongol has a handkerchief, which is but a slight improvement on the shirt. There is another method in vogue, mostly among girls. When the washing is completed, the hands are rubbed slowly over the face, gathering the moisture, which is sucked from them as they pass over the mouth. The sound and the idea are not pleasant, but it is undoubtedly the cleanest method of wiping the face, and as such perhaps the least disagreeable to the beholders.

Feet are never washed except by accident, as when herding sheep in the rain, or crossing a stream on foot. Bathing is not customary. Said a Mongol, 'It is too cold in winter; in summer the flies bite.' This is of course the sluggard's excuse. If they were alive to the importance of it, nine-tenths of them could secure a bath with very little trouble. I once met an invalid, who, being a doctor, prescribed hot-bathing for his disease, and had fitted up a gem of a little bath in his tent. He had sunk into the ground a tub about three feet deep and big enough to sit in, and

hung from the roof of the tent two felt curtains. All he had to do was to get inside, close the curtains, and then he was at liberty to dress and undress in complete retirement; and this is probably the shape the Mongol bath will take, when the Mongols are persuaded of its utility as a preventive against disease.

The dress of the poor is wretched. Men and women go about in rags, tatters, and filth, shivering in the cold. The rich dress impressively. The men have beautiful robes lined with the finest lambs' skin, and hang a profusion of massive silver ornaments from their belt. They are also great on fur caps, and one may sometimes meet a man wearing a cap worth as much as all the rest of his clothes put together. But the true criterion of a Mongol's wealth and standing is his snuff-bottle; and as custom requires him to hand it on introduction, one can make a good guess as to the position of any man he may meet. These bottles come from Peking, and range in price from a few cents to eighty taels. The cheap ones are made of glass; the valuable ones are beautiful stones skilfully hollowed out and nicely finished. Women do not usually carry a snuff-bottle, but on ceremonial occasions they also produce it from the box where it is stowed away. Women's bottles are almost uniformly small, thin, flat stones, with scarcely any capacity; and, as far as I have yet seen, always empty. This being empty does not matter. It is handed with due ceremony and form, and the recipient, too polite to see that it is empty, smells it deliberately, and returns it with dignity.

But the most remarkable parts of Mongol costume

are the hair ornaments and head-dresses of the women. Even a poor woman, if married, has a profusion of silver ornaments and fittings on her head and hanging from her hair, which contrasts strangely with the dirt and squalor of her general appearance. The precise nature and shape of these ornaments vary with the tribes; and any one well up in this species of heraldry can tell a woman's tribe at a glance. But though they vary, they all agree in being cumbersome —perhaps a Mongol would say impressive—and in necessitating a style of dressing the hair, which, when once performed, will most likely be allowed to stand undisturbed till growth disarranges it and demands fresh attention. Perhaps one may think a head not dressed for a month would look untidy. Not at all. Though the hair from which the pendants hang is not undone, the upper hair can be dressed so as to look quite neat. *They smear it with glue*, and if one does not know and does not examine too closely, it looks well enough.

Some of the tribes have hanging ornaments, which are suspended from a band running round the head, and kept in place by a hook in the ear. As these pendants are heavy, it is quite painful to see how the lobe is distended when the head is bent forward; and the unpleasant feeling is increased by noticing that many of the elder females have had their ears rent open, some of them more than once. One tribe I am acquainted with has a head-dress for its matrons which projects up and makes it impossible for a cap to sit on the head. On occasions of ceremony, such as formal introductions, or the meeting of friends after absence,

a cap must be worn. It is placed above the ornaments and tied on, remaining all the while clear of the head, and looks so absurd that it requires an effort to receive the lady's snuff-bottle with becoming gravity.

The everyday gear permanently worn is sufficiently cumbersome, but on gala days a perfect curtain of beads is superadded; and when a crowd of women, arranged in flaming dresses and rich fur caps, enveloped almost to the waist in strings of red coral beads, and flashing with the sheen of silver ornaments, take their stand together in the veranda of a temple, the effect is striking. In the presence of such a sight, none but the blind and the prejudiced would refuse to admit that the beauty of these women is enhanced by their ornaments. Mongol women, on seeing foreign ladies, are struck by the absence of head-gear; and we are in the habit of trying to persuade ourselves that beauty is, when unadorned, adorned the most. Mongol women when young are often beautiful, but always look best in their ornaments; and perhaps their foreign sisters might gain something, as far as mere look is concerned, by an impressive head-dress, though coral beads and glue would hardly do. The difference between them and us is this': the Mongol woman's field of attraction is confined to her face and appearance, while we estimate a lady's worth, not so much by her looks, as by her mental qualities. The Mongol woman is scarcely taught that she has a mind at all, and it is not strange that, having nothing else to recommend her, she should strive to excel us in making the most of her face.

The dress of the men also is more becoming than ours. To be convinced of this, you have only to glance at a foreigner in his tights and short coat, and a Mongol in his ample robe flowing down to his heels. Let us not grudge him his looks. If we had as little to do as he, we might dress as well.

CHAPTER XVI.

MONGOL STORIES.

The recluse—The good king and the bad king—The wizard —The painter and the joiner.

I. *The Recluse.*

WHEN the Mongols want to encourage any one in a life given up to the pursuit of the higher things of their religion, they sometimes tell the following story, which is, of course, the popular version of one of their multitudinous religious legends.

A lama once gave himself up to meditation, prayer, and study, on a mountain side. For three years he prayed assiduously, hoping that Borhan[1] would reveal himself to him; but the three years passed and no vision came. Disheartened, worn out, and impoverished, he quitted his mountain abode to return to the haunts and occupations of men. On his way he came to the foot of a precipitous hill of rock, where he beheld a man sawing away at the hill with a hair.

[1] Buddha.

'What are you up to?' asked the lama. 'I am going to saw through this hill,' replied the man. 'What,' said the lama, 'with a hair? It is impossible!' 'Ah no,' said the man, 'it is not impossible; patience and perseverance will enable me to cut through this hill with a hair.' At this the lama wondered much, and turned away musing thus: 'This man is content to sit and work away at the hopeless task of sawing through a hill with a hair. I should not then be discouraged. I have striven for three years to have a revelation of Borhan, and am discouraged because I have not yet succeeded. Compared with this man's case, my three years are nothing. I am ashamed of myself for being discouraged. I'll go back, and try for other three years.'

Back he went, and had another three years' trial, with all its many hardships, and still no revelation. Again discouraged, he gave up the attempt, and set out to return to the world. On his way he came to a hill where he saw a man with an enormous cauldron, into which, every now and then, a drop of water descended from a rock.

'What are you doing?' asked the lama. 'Filling my pot with water,' said the man. 'What,' said the lama, 'fill such a pot with a stray drop of water that falls now and again?' 'It's a slow process,' said the man, 'but it will fill in time.'

At this the lama wondered, and mused thus: 'I have spent six years striving for a revelation of Borhan, and am discouraged because I have not got it. If this man can contentedly wait till his pot is filled by this slow process, I ought not to be discouraged because I

have waited in vain six years. I'll go back, and have another three years of it.'

Back he went; three years passed, and still no revelation. Utterly disheartened, he gave up the whole thing finally, and took his way back to the world. At the foot of a mountain he saw a poor female dog covered with sores, which swarmed with worms. The lama stopped and considered what he was to do. If he freed the dog from the worms and cast them on the ground, *they* would die. If he did not free the dog, *it* would die. In this dilemma he conceived the idea of giving half the flesh of his own thigh to the worms and half to the dog. He was just in the act of doing so, when, above him, there appeared a glory and an apparition—it was Maitreya Borhan appeared to him at last! Looking towards the dog—it was gone; it had only been an apparition.

Maitreya asked the lama who and what he was. The lama complained, that though an earnest seeker, he had been left in the dark and without any vision or revelation for nine long years. Suddenly the splendid dress of the apparition changed in appearance, and Maitreya said, 'Foolish man that you are, I have never been more than two inches from you all these years. Look, don't you see how your spittle and snuff have bespattered all my robe?' Thus spake Maitreya, and the lama suddenly and at once attained to the status of Borhan.

II. *The Good King and the Bad King.*

When they wish to encourage virtue and discourage vice, they tell such stories as the following:—

There was a good king, who was liberal to the poor and to begging lamas. He was liberal to every one, and gave away so much that, latterly, he had little left. He had one only son, whom on his death-bed he instructed to follow his example, and do as his father had done. As long as he had anything at all he was to be careful to give to those who had nothing.

The father died and the son succeeded to the kingdom. His inheritance was a poverty-stricken one, and, by following his father's precepts, the young king was soon reduced to the most abject poverty. His father's instructions were explicit. 'If you have a yard of cloth, and meet a man who has none, give him half. If you have two cups of millet, and meet a man who has none, give him one.' Following these instructions, the young king had at last only ten cash left. A begging lama came, and to him he gave five cash. Having now only five cash left, he proposed to follow the fortunes of the begging lama. The lama was well pleased, and the two set out together.

There was a bad king who, by continual oppression and robbery, had amassed great wealth. He had three sons, and on his death he charged them to continue his policy of robbery and oppression. He had grown rich by it, and by it they would keep rich, as their father had done: they followed their father's advice and example, and kept on increasing in wealth.

The poverty-stricken son of the good king, following the fortunes and hardships of his master, arrived at the court of the three sons of the bad kings, and was an object of curiosity and scorn to them all. They said among themselves, 'Our father was right to warn us against the policy of the king whose son is now reduced to the state of a beggar.' So they called their father wise and themselves happy. Meanwhile, an idea struck the youngest, and he said to his two elder brethren: 'Suppose I join the lama for a frolic, and travel with him, to see the suffering of the penniless king! Do you approve or disapprove?' 'Capital,' they said; 'by all means do so, and come back and tell us all about it, that we may divert ourselves with the story of his sufferings.' So the youngest brother joined himself to the lama, and the party of three, the lama and his two disciples, set out on their travels. They had the usual hardships and consolations of such a lot—hunger and thirst, and sore travel; eating, drinking, hospitality, and rest. Finally they came to a great mountain, at the foot of which was a single tent, poor, ragged and black. The only inhabitants of the tent were two old people. There the travellers put up and rested. The old people, having no children of their own, begged the lama to give them one of his scholars. The lama ordered the son of the good king to remain. To this the youth would not agree. He had given himself up as a scholar to his master, and from his master he would not part on any account. The son of the bad king, tired of the roaming life, consented to remain there, and, leaving him behind, the lama and his disciple began to ascend the mountain. They had

already gone a good way when the lama said: 'Ah, I have left my rosary in the tent, it is on the west side; go you and bring it; don't enter the tent, but stand a good way off outside and call for it.'

After a while the scholar returned to his master, trembling and pale. 'What's the matter?' asked the teacher. The scholar replied, 'Oh, I saw the old man and the old woman transformed into horrible creatures, sucking the blood of the son of the bad king.' 'Just so,' said the lama; 'he came here to see your distress, and in place of that you saw his.'

Arrived at the top of the mountain the lama said, 'I must now go away and leave you.' The scholar was in great grief, and begged his teacher to wait and teach him something before he left. The teacher consented, and spent some days in instructing his disciple, and teaching him, among other things, the art of flying.

After he had made good progress in the art of flying, his teacher said: 'Go away there to the eastward, see what that is, and come again.' The disciple went and saw. It was a huge place, colder than cold, in which people were being frozen hard, then broken across, this process being repeated unceasingly on the same persons. Among the sufferers he recognized the bad king being put through his tortures. 'Fly away now in the other direction,' said the teacher, 'see what that is there, and come again.' The disciple went and saw a place full of trees and green grasses, and flowers, and fruits, and delights. He also saw his parents seated n yellow sedans, borne along in state, followed by a crowd of adoring lamas. He called to his father, but

he would not regard him; he addressed him, but he would not answer. He recognized them well enough, but they would accord him no token of recognition; so, having waited till he was satisfied with seeing, he returned to his master. 'Yes,' said the lama, 'you have seen your parents enjoying the reward of their virtuous and meritorious life on earth. For their good deeds they have attained to the state of Borhan, and are enjoying the happiness you saw.' 'But why,' asked the youth, 'would they not recognize me nor speak to me?' 'Because,' said the lama, 'you have not yet changed this body of yours.' Thereupon the lama left him. The lama was not the mere begging priest he seemed, but Sakyamuni.

III. *The Wizard.*

When they want to impress any one who is sceptical as to the power of their wizards, they tell such a story as this:—

The merits of a famous wizard were being discussed, when a rash young man remarked that perhaps the wizard had great power, and perhaps he could deceive others, but he could never deceive him. The wizard, hearing of this boast, had his fine saddle put on his splendid black horse, and rode to the abode of the rash young man. The conversation soon turned to the supposed powers of the wizard, and the youth rather wished to put them to the test. The wizard said that was all right, but that meantime he was in trouble and wanted to get out of it. A Chinaman had come to his house, and refused to stir from it till

an old debt of ten taels was paid up. Failing the money, the Chinaman would be content with nothing less than the handsome black horse; but he, the wizard, was unwilling to let an animal worth thirty taels be sacrificed to clear a debt of ten taels, and so had come to offer to sell the animal for twenty taels to the young man. The wife was just in the act of pouring out three cups of tea, one for the wizard, one for her husband, one for herself, when the husband went out to have a look at the horse. As he looked at it he suddenly became unconscious, did not know where he was, and wandered about in a land without inhabitants, till, finally, he came to a single hut at the foot of a mountain not far from the sea-shore. The hut proved to be that of a lone woman who could give no account at all of herself. The young man also found that he, too, could give no account of himself, but remained a day or two under her roof.

When the time came for him to go he did not want to leave; had, in fact, nowhere to go to, and proposed to marry his hostess. They did marry, and between them managed to make life more endurable. The woman gathered fuel on the mountain, drew water, and busied herself with household concerns, while the husband went a-hunting and kept the house in provisions. In due time a child was born, to the great delight of the parents. 'Ah,' said they, 'we are three now, and don't need to fear.' Other two years passed away, and another child was born. 'Ah,' said they, 'we are four now, and may live at ease.' Six years in all elapsed, when one day, as the father returned loaded with a deer, and the mother was

nearing the house with a bundle of fuel, the youngest of the two children was seen creeping towards the sea, and suddenly fell in. Trying to save him, the elder also fell in, and the mother, distracted, trying to save her two children, fell in also. The father threw down the carcase of the deer, and rushed to the scene of the disaster, but he was too late, it was all over, and he was all alone. For a month or two he had rather a hard time of it. If he went for venison he had no fuel; if he went for fuel he had nothing to cook. Eventually he found himself unconscious, and uncertain as to his whereabouts, but saw a tent like his own with a horse tied before it, and was recalled to consciousness by his wife asking him, angrily, if he did not mean to drink his tea before it cooled.

The truth flashed upon him. He had been under the power of the wizard, and had experienced the joys and sorrows of six long years and more, all in less time than a cup of tea takes to cool.

IV. *The Painter and the Joiner.*

When they wish to deter a man from plotting evil against his neighbour, they tell such a story as the following, to show the danger a schemer runs of falling into his own snare:—

At the time of the accession of a certain king to the throne there were among his subjects a painter and a joiner, between whom there was a bitter feud. One day the painter went to the young king and said, 'Your royal father having taken a new birth, sent for me, and when I went to him I found him in the en-

joyment of power beyond all imagination, and he gave me the following letter.' The letter was addressed to the young king his son, and ran as follows: 'Now that I am in heaven I am happy. I am about to build a temple here; so, my son, send me from your city, Universal Joy, the joiner. I will rejoice in the prosperity of the kingdom under your rule, and from here will help you in your endeavours for its good.'

The young king was rejoiced at the contents of the letter, and having called the joiner, said to him, 'My father, having been born into heaven, has sent for you to build him a temple,' and handed him the letter. The joiner, seeing the letter, thought thus within himself: 'This is altogether absurd; this painter is always plotting mischief.' Thinking thus within himself, he asked the king, 'How am I to get to heaven?' The king asked the painter, and the painter replied, 'Place the joiner and his tools in the centre, pile up fuel sprinkled all over with oil, then, to the sound of drums, cymbals, flutes, and fiddles, set fire to the pile, and the joiner will go off on a smoke horse, so says the king your father.' The joiner replied, 'Before I go I want to make a few preparations. I'll be ready to start in seven days.' He then went home and told his wife all about the mischief the painter was plotting against him, and, as a means of escape from the evil, dug a subterranean passage from the inside of his house to the place where he was to be burned, terminating the passage with a stone, which again he covered with sand.

On the seventh day, the king, that he might send the joiner to his father, exacted of all the people a

basket of fuel and a bottle of oil. This was all piled up, the joiner and his tools placed in the centre, and fire applied. The drums beat, the cymbals clashed, the flutes whistled, the flames leaped up, and the joiner, under cover of the smoke, entered the subterranean passage and went home with his tools on his back. The painter, pointing to the thick volumes of smoke that rose into the air, exclaimed, 'There goes the joiner,' and the spectators dispersed joyfully, remarking, 'The joiner has got to heaven.'

For the space of a month the joiner lay quiet, washing himself daily with milk to make his person white. When the month was over he appeared before the king robed in silk, and bearing a letter purporting to be from the old king to his son. The letter was as follows: 'I am much pleased with your pious management of the realm. Universal Joy, the joiner, having built for me a temple here, give him a suitable recompense for his labour; and as the temple wants decorating, send me up Eternal Joy, the painter, in the same manner as you sent the joiner.' The king asked, 'When you got to heaven, was my father glad to see you?' The joiner answered in all respects as if he had been to heaven. The young king was delighted, and giving a handsome reward to the joiner, sent for the painter, who, seeing the white skin and silk robes of the joiner, really supposed that he had not died, but had been to heaven and back. Imagining that his rival had really gone to heaven on a smoke horse, the painter signified his willingness to go after the lapse of seven days. The hour came and the man. The painter with his paints and brushes

was placed amidst the oily fuel, fire was applied, the smoke rose, the flames leaped upon him, in agony he plunged about and yelled aloud, but, drowned by the sound of the drums, cymbals, flutes, and fiddles, his cries were unheard, and he was burnt to a cinder.

THE END.

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